

Giorgio Caponetti



MY LIFE

Eighty years my way

ITALIANO

ENGLISH



Turin 1945.

I was born in Turin on September 16, 1945, just after the war ended, at Corso Emilia 40, corner of Via Cigna, on the Dora Bridge, in Borgata Aurora, near Porta Palazzo.



My mother, from Mantua, was named Luce. My father, from Rome, was named Nicola.



Mother Luce was born in 1904 in the Mirasole district of San Benedetto Po and arrived in Turin in 1924 when she was twenty. She was the daughter of Francesco Rotta and Carolina Lucchini.

Father Nicola was born in Rome in 1901 but raised in Turin from 1903 onwards. He was the son of Benedetto Caponetti and Raffaella Conti.

During the war, between 1943 and 1945, Luce and Nicola, along with teenage Marisa, were evacuated to Pessinetto, in the Lanzo Valleys, to escape the bombings. My father commuted by train because he worked in Turin, on Corso Vinzaglio, at the Revenue Office.

My mother and my sister Marisa, who was fifteen, remained in Pessinetto, never going down to Turin, in a small house overlooking the Stura di Lanzo.

In the valleys were the Nazi Germans and the Fascist Republicans; in the mountains were the Partisans. My mother, Luce, became one of the "partisan runners" who passed notes and a little food to the Bandits. But someone ratted them out.

Luce was in her flannel dress, and Marisa was wearing her velvet one with white ribbons on her head. My mother, Luce, stood erect, head held high, clutching her daughter, who was now almost as tall as her, being sixteen years old.

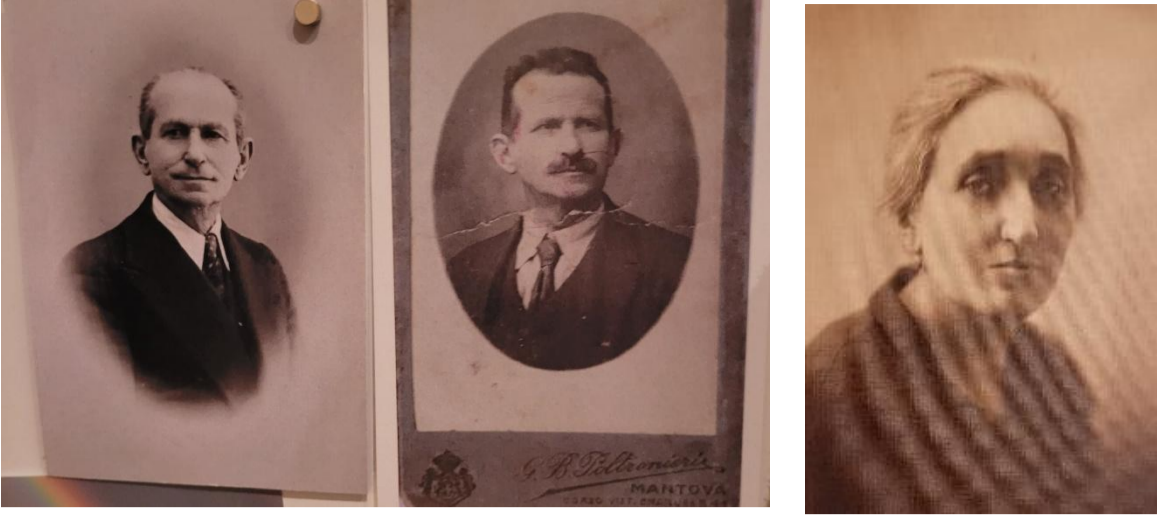
The fascists had crouched at the two side windows, a meter away, and opened machine-gun fire on the partisans, who were stationed a hundred meters away, ready to conquer Pessinetto as well. The partisans didn't respond, because Luce and Marisa were there to act as a thin shield. After a long exchange of fire, the fascists left, snarling their last threats: perhaps they wanted to conserve their few remaining ammunitions.

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Since it was April 1945 and I was born in September, it's obvious that I was already in my mother Luce's lap. Mother Luce's parents, my maternal grandparents, were grandfather Francesco Rotta, born in 1868, and Carolina Lucchini, grandmother Carolina, a little younger.



Grandpa Francesco would have died at ninety-six without ever having had a single illness, deaf as a bell but perfectly lucid: the most wonderful grandfather a child could dream of. He taught me how to live. He taught me how to give injections, after boiling the serenga, he taught me how to sew on a button and tie my shoes.

Here we are on the balcony at Corso Emilia 40, overlooking Via Cigna. It's 1947, so I'm two years old. He's seventy-nine.

Grandpa Francesco and Grandma Carolina would have had seven children, but we'll talk about that later.

First, let's talk about Grandpa Francesco, known as 'l Fraschìn.

At fourteen, he went to work in a coal mine in Belgium. He'd been a miner for five years—back then! Yet he'd gotten through it.

Not only that: there in Marcinelle, he'd met a schoolteacher, the daughter of a Sicilian miner and a cook from Puglia, who taught him to read and write.

Reading, a little with difficulty, but he could read; writing, just enough to sign his name and not have to sign with a cross like almost everyone else did. I think the schoolteacher, who was in her twenties and quite plump, taught him something else, too, because he had become a man: he was five feet seven inches tall, athletic, and agile. A truly handsome boy.

At twenty, he returned to San Benedetto Po and became friends with Enrico Ferri, who was six or seven years his senior, who would talk about socialism at the tavern. Ferri, who would become the editor of *Avanti!* in 1905 and then be replaced by Benito Mussolini in 1912, would become his new boss.



Grandpa Fraschìn was very good at making friends with everyone; and at actually being friends. Fraschìn had signed up for the Socialist Party in 1896, one of the first PSI membership cards. And he began canvassing among the residents of Portiolo and the surrounding area.

In 1898, after remaining single for about ten years, he started a relationship with a beautiful, illiterate girl from Suzzara, Carolina Lucchini. Carolina had become pregnant, and they had bought a house in the Mirasole district, right on the banks of the great river, two or three kilometers from San Benedetto Po and Portiolo: a humble terraced farmhouse with a farmyard and a chicken coop. Francesco scraped by, gardening a bit and diving into the Po to bring branches and debris to shore to sell. He was a great swimmer, having learned in the great river as a child. And swimming in the river is no small feat: one of his little friends had been swept away; another had been sucked into a whirlpool and disappeared.

La Luce e i suoi fratelli.

Lì in contrada Mirasole nacquero tutti i sette figli di nonno Francesco e di nonna Carolina: la Maria nel 1898, l'Enrico detto *Tarteo* nel 1900, la Zorilla detta *Zori* nel 1902, la Luce nel 1904, il Gino detto *Provvido* nel 1906, la Vanda nel 1908 e il Neno nel 1912. Tutti belli e tutti sani.



La Maria
1898

Il Tarteo
1901

La Zori
1902

La Luce
1904

La Vanda
1908

Il Provvido
1910

Il Neno
1916

La Macchina.



In 1967, at twenty-two, I had recently bought a 500. It was my first car. My father and mother had never owned one.

I was happy; I drove all over Turin, even taking a few girls up to the hills.

"Listen, now that you have a car, will you take me to Portiolo to visit my cousins? I'll pay for the gas," my mother said to me after a few weeks.

We set off at dawn on a beautiful May day. She sat next to me wearing a blue, flowered canvas hat. Two small bags on the small back seat, a bag with two sandwiches. And off we went.

From Turin to Portiolo is almost five hundred kilometers. We did it on three full tanks. By the time we reached Piacenza, it started to get hot.

I opened the hood. "Look at what a beautiful little car!" she said pleased.

I had bought myself a baseball cap (a bit like Alberto Sordi's, who played the American, now that I think about it).

She had brought a blue canvas hat.

We arrived in Portiolo when there was still a bit of sun: the 500 had gone like a train.

Great celebrations for Guglielma, after perhaps forty years of not seeing each other: "Now there! Now go!!"

"Look at Giòrgiu as he is great!" There in Portiolo I have always been "Giòrgiu, the son of Luce." There in Portiolo I would always be Giorgio, the son of Luce.

When you are born to a mother named Luce, you are born and raised in the Aurora district, you take your mother to the Mirasole district, you return to live in Turin in the Aurora district, you can truly say you are a man blessed by heaven.

While we were with Guglielma, my mother said to me: "Listen, one of these days, will you take us to Contrada Mirasole, to see where I was born?"



And there, in front of their little house, he told me "One day when I was thirteen, during the Great War, in 1916 or 1917, I was sweeping the yard when I heard a noise in the sky. I looked up... and there was a plane flying!

I shouted "Nona!" to my grandmother Egle, who was sitting in her chair peeling beans and was a little deaf: "There's a plane that flies! Look!" And she hadn't even looked up and said to me: "Gosh! Only birds fly! Just think..."



In 1967, my mother Luce was finally happy: that trip to Portiolo and Mirasole, then to Turin the visit to the small advertising agency CGSS – Caponetti Gagliardi Saffirio Silombria – Creativi Associati in Corso Matteotti, the fact that I was studying at university, made her happy.

"Mi ha portata dai miei parenti a Mantova con la sua Cinquecento..." diceva alle vicine sul pianerottolo di corso Emilia 40.

A dicembre è stata colpita da un ictus che la paralizzò e le tolse la parola. Si esprimeva solo con gli occhi, quando andavo a trovarla in ospedale. È morta l'11 dicembre 1968, senza essere mai più tornata nel suo alloggio al terzo piano.



Mantova, anno 1918.



At the end of the Great War, in 1918, Francesco, Carolina, and all seven children had left the banks of the Po and gone to live in the center of Mantua, on Via dell'Accademia, in front of the Teatrino Scientifico, because my grandfather Frascìn had found a good, steady job as a stretcher-bearer at the hospital. Perhaps also Thanks to Enrico Ferri.

Even in Mantua, grandfather Francesco continued to be involved in politics. In January 1921, during the 17th congress of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in Livorno, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was founded on the initiative of the left-wing faction of the party led by Antonio Gramsci and Amedeo Bordiga.

My grandfather Frascìn left the PSI and took out one of the first PCI membership cards. I still have it, in Tuscania.

While working as a stretcher-bearer, he did political propaganda at the hospital, handing out flyers and supporting the communist ideal. He was a very good stretcher-bearer; they taught him how to be a nurse, administering injections with a syringe; he was promoted to full-time nurse.



In 1924, the year of Giacomo Matteotti's assassination, black-shirted fascists beat him with truncheons a couple of times outside his house on Via dell'Accademia, leaving him more dead than alive on the street.

They also beat my uncle Provido, who was in his twenties.

The whole family was forced to leave Mantua in a hurry, partly because the girls had grown tall and very beautiful and could no longer leave the house. They packed their few belongings and came to Turin at the end of 1924.

Maria and Zorilla had stopped in Milan because they knew someone; they were going to get engaged to two Milanese women whom they would marry.

My father Nicola was also forced to wear the rough coat, but he didn't scare anyone. This is perhaps the only portrait of a smiling fascist hierarch in the entire history of the sinister Fascist era!





Nonno Francesco e la Carolina, l'Enrico, la Luce, la Vanda, Provido and Neno had moved to Turin, to Corso Novara 25, at the corner of Corso Palermo. Over the years, their children would leave home. The two of them remained there.

When I was a child, my mother and I would visit them at least a couple of times a week, bringing Grandma

Carolina a pack of blue Nazionali cigarettes. Grandma Carolina was dry and grumpy, but she had violent bouts of love for me.

She hugged me, squeezed me, and said, "Your sweet little thing!" It scared me a little.

As she got older, she always had headaches, and my mom, in addition to the national team, bought her Kalmine.



Grandma Carolina would have died at eighty-two, when I was ten; it was 1955.

Grandpa Francesco would have died at ninety-six, when I was eighteen.

Madama Pastore.

After Carolina's death, Grandpa Francesco came to live with us at 40 Corso Emilia.

He slept in a room rented by Madame Pastore, door to door with our

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third-floor apartment. He had lunch, dinner, and spent much of the day with us. He spoke only in Mantuan dialect.

He was always reading the newspaper, wearing Cavour-style glasses, spelling out the letters by moving his lips. "I never went to school, and I learned a little something from Portiolo's schoolteacher," he said, giving a mischievous smile. "But I know how to sign my name."

And in the 1948 referendum he had voted for the Republic, and in the elections he voted for the Italian Communist Party.

We went together to Balùn to buy glasses at Cavour's, and to the bowling club at the Ciriè-Lanzo railway workers' club to watch those playing bocce on the Lungodora.

He had the immense gift of being able to strike up a conversation with everyone. He was always dressed with dignity, in a jacket and tie: all old-fashioned, but worn well and elegantly.

The most wonderful grandfather a boy could dream of, my grandfather Francesco.

In the summer he came with us to the mountains in Meana di Susa, where we went in July and August

At ninety, he took long walks to pick arugula, mountain strawberries, blueberries, chamomile, lüertìn, and wild spinach.

With a girl her age whom she'd met there. Indomitable old lion!





Let's move on to my paternal grandparents, the Caponettis.

They were grandfather Benedetto Caponetti, born in 1867, and grandmother Raffaella Conti, a few years younger.

He was born in 1867 in Percile, in Ciociaria, about sixty kilometers from Rome. A small town in the former Papal State near Rome.

Let's keep in mind that the Kingdom of Italy was born only in 1861, with King Victor Emmanuel II of Savoy and Camillo Cavour as Prime Minister. The Papal States had indeed become Italian, but Rome remained under the Pope. The surrounding areas—Ciociaria, Abruzzo, and Molise—were areas of banditry. A veritable war, perhaps fomented by the Vatican through the parishes, to fight the Piedmontese invaders. Or at least to make their lives impossible.

In 1886, grandfather Benedetto Caponetti, a native of Ciociaria but born Italian, enlisted in the first Royal Carabinieri of the Kingdom of Italy. He was smart and capable. He rose quickly in the ranks, being promoted to Corporal, then Brigadier, then Sergeant, then Sergeant Major, and then Marshal.

He was decorated with a Silver Medal and a Bronze Cross, one for Civilian Valor and one for Military Valor.



The Caponettis in Turin.

In 1901, after fifteen years of honourable service, the force promoted him to Marshal. Major and transferred to Turin.

I think he was assigned to the Carabinieri Secret Service, perhaps seconded to the police headquarters on Via Grattoni, because when we passed Corso Vinzaglio, on the long walks in the center of Turin that my father Nicola took me on almost every day, he would say to me: "My father worked there."

Here is Cavalier Benedetto Caponetti with his children.



The Conti of Capracotta.

In 1900, while stationed in Molise in command of the Capracotta Station, Brigadier Benedetto Caponetti met and married a girl from a good family of the local minor nobility, Raffaella Conti di Capracotta, and they had two children: Nicola, my father (1901), and Maria (1904).



I never knew Grandpa Benedetto because he died in 1917, in Turin, when my father was sixteen. However, I remember Grandma Raffaella well, because she died in 1955, the same year as Grandma Carolina, when I was already ten years old. She lived at Via San Quintino 6 with my aunt Maria, a spinster, fat, and a little crazy. My father Nicola often took me to find her and take her for a walk under the arcades.

And every time I went to her at Via San Quintino 6, grandmother Raffaella, small, old, always dressed in black, with a black ribbon and a little pearl around her neck, used to say to me: "Always remember that you are N.H., Nobilis Homo".

And every time I returned home to Corso Emilia 40, my mother Luce, a socialist and republican, would say to me, "It's all bullshit!" and she would look askance at my father Nicola: "What are you putting in his head?"

Elementary School.

At six years old, I went to the Giuseppe Parini Elementary School on Corso Giulio Cesare, at the corner of Corso Brescia (the continuation of Corso Emilia).



In third grade, I was awarded the Parini class's best student award. I was thrilled at home with my mother, Lu. There's someone crying with joy while holding the letter from the Superintendent. They take me shopping for a little man's suit: a complete gray suit, with a jacket, vest, and gray flannel pants. And a white shirt and a tie. And black shoes. My dad ties my tie for me.

We go to the awards ceremony, in a large building downtown. The room is a veritable theater, with the stalls and the stage at the back, on which there's a long table with a green tablecloth. We sit in the seats they point out to us; Mom is thrilled, her bottom barely resting on the seat, leaning forward. The theater fills up: the winners will be the best student from the many elementary schools, the many middle schools, the many vocational training programs, and the high schools (classical, scientific, teacher training, etc.). Many well-dressed gentlemen and two ladies in suits and hats take the stage.

The gentleman sitting in the middle of the table speaks. Then another, then another. Finally they call my name. Mom and Dad are nervous. I take the three steps. At eight years old, I'm already quite grown up. I stop in front of them. They all smile at me.

"Giorgio Caponetti, what do you prefer, the De Agostini Geographical Atlas or football?" the man sitting in the center asks me. I have no doubt: "Football!"



It's made of leather and closes with a lace after inflating the inner tube. They officially hand it over to me along with a roll of paper tied with a neatly tied tricolor ribbon. Everyone applauds: the audience, dignitaries, and teachers. I step out with the football in my hand. As we kids played in the yard, we used to say "fulbol."

At this point, my parents, who aren't young because my father is already fifty-four and my mother fifty-one, decide to let me skip fifth grade and take the middle school entrance exam.

Where should I take the exam? In a fee-paying school. And fee-paying schools, in 1951, were exclusively run by priests.



I took the exam as a private student at a Salesian Institute, San Giovanni Evangelista, at the beginning of Via Madama Cristina on the corner of Corso Vittorio, after going almost every afternoon to Maestro Bertolino's house on Corso Giulio Cesare with my Fifth Year book bag and simultaneously studying the Fourth Year syllabus.

Le Scuole Medie.

In June 1954, I passed my elementary school exams and entered middle school, at Cesare Balbo on Via della Cittadella, which was inaugurated that very year.

I was nine years old. I was a year ahead of my peers, much to the delight of my mom and dad. In the courtyard at Corso Emilia 40, I even played with my football by myself, kicking it against the warehouse wall.

As a reward for passing the entrance exam, mi they give away a small racing bike identical to Fausto Coppi's, il *Campionissimo*.



Porta Palazzo.



Ever since I was little, I've walked with my mother Luce to the Porta Palazzo market. Porta Palazzo, half destroyed by bombing, is reborn and on its way to becoming the largest open-air market in Europe, as it still is today.

I remember carrying a watermelon home with me when I was about ten years old. I understand that walking a kilometer from Porta Palazzo to Corso Emilia 40 with a watermelon bigger than a fussball, which I carry with both hands, can be very long and tiring when you're nine years old.

Corso Emilia 40.

L'appartamento di corso Emilia 40 è composto da due camere e cucina, il bagno e un lungo corridoio al terzo piano. È un alloggio luminoso perché ha tutte porte-finestre vetrate che danno sui balconi: due su via Cigna e una su corso Emilia/Lungodora Napoli proprio sopra al ponte della Dora. I balconi sono tre: da quello della camera da letto c'è un panorama meraviglioso: la Mole, la collina, il Faro della Vittoria; da quelli su via Cigna, si vedono tutte le montagne dal Monviso alla Sacra di San Michele. Purtroppo fanno da sfondo alle ciminiere delle *Ferriere Fiat*, della Michelin e delle tante industrie che sbuffano e vomitano nuvole di fumo nero.



Il lettino.

Dormo in camera con i miei. Alla sera, mentre la mamma mi mette a nanna nel mio lettino con le sponde di rete di corda.

Mio papà ha già acceso la radio a valvole.

Mi addormento con *Che gelida manina*, con *Un bel di' vedremo*, con *All'alba vincerò*.

Ma anche con *Ciribiribìn* e *Maramao perché sei morto*, *Parlami d'amore Mariù* e *Vola colomba*.



Il Turibolo.



Once a year, during Lent before Easter, the parish priest comes by for the Blessing.

At that time, Dad is always at the office. Mamma Luce ushers him into the house, followed by an altar boy holding the thurible.

With the sprinkler, he blesses the hallway, the bedroom, the kitchen, the dining room, and even the bathroom. He watches everything.

Finally, the altar boy hands over the embroidered bag to hold the offering. Mamma Luce reluctantly places a two-lire coin in his hand.

He looks at her as if to say, "...alone?" And they go off to bless another neighbor.

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Il Camposanto.



Marisa died on December 29, 1945, three and a half months after I was born. I learned much later that she had been struck by polio as a child, that she walked awkwardly, and that her face would grimace involuntarily. But she was cheerful, had a beautiful smile, and sang beautifully with a clear, clear voice. She loved songs, especially "La Paloma." She knew all the words. When the radio played that song, my mother Luce would burst into tears, murmuring, "My little girl..."

Every week, ever since I was little, they took me to the cemetery to lay fresh flowers on Marisa's grave: a thick slab of polished gray marble resting on the ground among countless other graves as far as the eye could see. There was a broken white marble column, an oval color photograph of polished ceramic; Marisa is truly beautiful, she laughs happily, she has lots of beautiful curly black hair. On the gray marble, her name is engraved in gold:

CAPONETTI MARIA LUISA
1929 - 1945

La Sfilata.



In 1949, I was four years old, and the Grande Torino tragedy struck. A friend of my mother's, Argia, also from Mantua, lived in an attic in Piazza Castello, above an upscale café called Mulassano, with two dormer windows overlooking the rear façade of Palazzo Madama, the monument to the Duke of Aosta, the Prefecture Palace, and the entire length of the square as far as Via Cernaia.

One day, Mom washes me thoroughly, combs my hair, and dresses me for the holidays: "Let's go to Argia's! Dad's coming too."

We walk from Corso Emilia to Piazza Castello.

"Let's go see the parade," Mom says.

We walk down to the Lungodora. They take my hand: "Walk without making a fuss, eh?" Dad asks, acting gruff but smiling.

We walk and walk, until we reach Piazza Castello.

We go up from Argia: there's an elevator to the fourth floor (which didn't exist on Corso Emilia and never would), and we walk the last flight.

"Come!" she says. We go inside and go to the dormer window.

Dad picks me up.

"Hold him tightly, there!" Mom Luce recommends.

I look outside. It's the first mass scene I see, as Dad holds me in his arms: a parade of trucks, one after the other, moving very slowly, arriving from Via Po.

But it's not the Carnival Parade I was expecting.

On the bed of each truck is a long wooden coffin.

"They're coffins," says Argia.



Il Tornado del 53.

“Let's run home, because the downpour is coming soon!” my mother Luce says while we're on the bridge on Via Cigna. I'm eight years old. There's a wind like I've never felt before; it almost knocked me over. They take me by the hand, we run, and by some miracle, we manage to get through the main door on Corso Emilia 40. We go up to the third floor. Thank goodness the windows were closed. We go into the kitchen. My father and I look outside: there's tutto che vola, persino alcune tegole.

It lasts forever. Then, almost suddenly, it all passes. We go to the bedroom balcony, the one overlooking the Dora River and the hill.

Madame Gallina has also come out onto the next balcony. "But... look at that... a piece of the Mole is missing!"



First Communion.

I take Communion at San Gioacchino, our parish, after attending an interminable and boring catechism class at the nuns' convent on Corso Napoli.

They bought me a suit: Let's get him a nice sailor's uniform, a little big so he can grow. My uncles from Genoa and my father's cousins from Rome are also coming.

At church, Uncle Gianni, Aunt Vanda's husband, is my godfather. I would only learn many, many years later that he was a member of the Freemasonry and was extremely anticlerical!

La zia Vanda.



Uncle Gianni was Aunt Vanda's husband; he was from Lucca, very distinguished, with a Versilia accent. They lived in Genoa because Uncle Gianni owned an olive oil refinery:

'olio *Filippo Berio*, da non Confuse with Fratelli Berio oil from Oneglia. Aunt Vanda had met him at a fashion show in Venice: she had become one of the most famous models of the 1930s and 1940s in Italy, first for La Merveilleuse in Turin, then for other labels; her photos were published in many magazines, including Harper's Bazaar; Vogue Italia had dedicated a cover to her.



My mom and Aunt Vanda loved each other immensely, because when she was just born, in Contrada Mirasole, it was my mom who fed her food because Grandma Carolina was too busy with the other children.

My mom Luce doesn't smile: after the death of my sister Marisa she lost her smile.

It is sad, to grow up with a mother who never smiles.

L'Olio Filippo Berio.

Uncle Gianni had an olive oil refinery, with the factory in Molassana: Filippo Berio Oil, not to be confused with Fratelli Oil *Berio di Oneglia*.

They had agreed that Filippo Berio Oil could only be sold abroad, while Fratelli Berio Oil would be marketed only in Italy.

Uncle Gianni spoke and wrote German, French, and English.

He handled his own correspondence, with letters arriving from all over the world. In the evenings, he would bring them home and, using steam, remove the stamps, let them dry, and put them in an album. He taught me how to attach the flap. He had made a smaller album for me with duplicates. I still have it, in Tuscania.



x1u

Uncle Gianni sold it in America and Argentina to Italians who wanted to dress their pasta and salad with good Italian oil. In reality, it was Spanish oil, and he had it shipped to Genoa to refine it at his Molassana plant.

I don't know how things work nowadays, but that's how he did it back then.

Sometimes he would take me to the Free Port of Loading, entering in front of the Sottoripa porticoes. We would pass the Finance Police sentry box, and he would salute them, and they would salute him respectfully. He would point out the tanks to me and have them sent to the plant.

When we went out, we went to Sottoripa to eat *focaccia*.

He taught me those things, perhaps because he saw me as the future heir to the firm; he and Aunt Vanda had no children.

But when I was about fifteen, I said, "I'm not interested, Uncle Gianni; I'd like to live my own way." He stopped speaking to me. I would never go to their house in Albaro, Genoa, again.

Uncle Gianni's brother was Sandro Volta, a renowned figure in international journalism; he was the Paris correspondent for *La Stampa di Torino* for twenty years.

He knew and associated with all the great names in politics and, above all, in culture, art, and music.

His wife was Ornella Volta, a scholar of the extravagant musician Eric Satie.

They also had a small house in Provence, in Cap Martin, and Aunt Vanda and Uncle Gianni, who often went to visit them from Genoa, had also met many beautiful names, including Pablo Picasso, from whom Uncle Gianni had bought the drawing of a dove that unfortunately never reached me.



1958, Il D'Azeglio.

After finishing middle school, being hopeless at arithmetic and poor at drawing, I convinced my parents not to let me study to be an accountant, a surveyor, or a technical expert.

I refused to go to the Istituto Tecnico Conciario on Corso Ciriè, which would be so convenient.

My poor parents had no choice but to enroll me in a high school.

"He's not suited to science... we'll have to enroll him in classical studies," they said resignedly, knowing it would be a long road. There are several in Turin: which one?

"The most convenient is D'Azeglio. Here on Via Cigna, the number 9 goes to the city center," my mother says. "Yes: it stops right on Corso Re Umberto at the corner of Via San Quintino, where Grandma Raffaella lives," my father says.



In September 1958, having just turned 13, I entered the Massimo D'Azeglio State Classical High School in Turin, located on Via Parini and the corner of Via San Quintino. I was in Section C. Foreign language: French.

I still don't know that that high school and that section had taught names like Leone Ginzburg, Cesare Pavese, Carlo Casalegno, Franco Antonicelli, Primo Levi, Norberto Bobbio, Massimo Mila, and even Gianni Agnelli; and so many other Turinese who would go on to form the elite of Italy's culture, finance, and the arts.

Today I am aware that I was one of the D'Azeglio Boys, those who shaped an era in Turin's history.

In the photo, I am the one to the left of Professor Lina Momigliano, a Jew, who had seen her father end up in the ovens of Auschwitz a few years earlier.

She is second from the left, first row, bottom.

She is older than us because she was born in 1943. She was conceived shortly before her father, Isacco Krachlmalnicoff, a publisher in Casale Monferrato, was sent in a sealed train to Auschwitz.



The Music.

There's so much to study and read at home, at Corso Emilia 40.

In my free time, I voraciously read every book they give me, from Emilio Salgari to Mark Twain, from *The Count of Monte Cristo* to *Don Quixote*.

But also Bulgakov; and even, secretly, Nabokov's *Lolita*.

I listen to music on the radio constantly, even classical music: it makes me dream. And I'm already a dreamer. As I still am today.

My mom and dad give me a Lesa record player: a cream-blue case with a removable lid.



The first record my mom wants to buy is Schubert's *Ave Maria* sung by Beniamino Gigli.

My dad buys *Vivere* sung by Tito Schipa.

I ask for *Diana* by Paul Anka, *Only You* by the Platters, and *Come Prima* by Tony Dallara.



Then, as a Christmas present a couple of years later, they gave me my first tape recorder, a *Geloso*.

The amazing thing is being able to record what I say and what I sing.

And, when I record, I sing with the most beautiful voice I have: it's already the voice of a young adult.

Music becomes an essential part of my life: all music, classical and pop, from any period. I'm starting to develop an ear for it.



Grandpa Francesco, now that we have rented Madame Pastore's room, I am now renting from Madame Pastore the room of her brother Andrea, who died years ago. In exchange for a few lire, he convinces her to give it to me.

It's a 19th-century Neapolitan lutherie guitar.

My dad, who had played the mandolin a bit as a young man, gave me a tuning fork, a small whistle with a single note: A, to which I tune the second string from the top of the guitar.

Then, using that A as a reference, I tune the other five strings: E A D G B E.

I became immensely passionate about it: it would be my lifelong passion.

I played in all my free time. I learned to strum well by singing the first songs of De André, Brassens, and Édith Piaf, also to practice French pronunciation, which I fluently master.

Piazza San Carlo.



When I finish school, I walk downtown to stroll with my high school classmates under the arcades in Turin's city center. Friendships that will last a lifetime: the greatest treasure I'll ever have. Turin is increasingly the city of Fiat. In 1957, the 500 is launched.

The first stirrings of war are felt: strikes, unions, the first attacks.

After two years of high school, I go up to the second floor of D'Azeglio and arrive at the high school.

Same section C, same classmates, although some have failed and some have preferred a change of scenery. A few new classmates replace them. Principal Sanfilippo is right when he warns us in the Great Hall: "D'Azeglio doesn't compromise!"

Being Sicilian, his pronunciation is "Il Tazeglio non transice!" and we end up having stomach aches holding back our laughter.



In Gymnastics class we played basketball, which wasn't called basketball yet.

"Why don't you come with us to Magenta? There's a much bigger indoor court and a real team that plays in the junior league."

My parents signed me up and bought me Superga shoes, shorts, and a tracksuit.

We boys from Section C did gymnastics with the boys from Section D in the D'Azeglio gym: more new friends.

There was Carlo Buffa di Perrero, grandson of one of the founders of the Touring Club Italiano. In the winter, during break time, he would pass by in the hallway asking, "Who's coming to Cervinia skiing on Sunday?"

After graduating in Law, he founded *Promotur*, destined to become Turin's largest tour operator. It's in full swing and is partly responsible for Turin's tourism revival. And he's eighty years old, and he looks great.

One day, I convinced my parents and they gave me the money to sign up for the trip.

Then they bought me a windbreaker, boots, and used skis from Hikory.

The ride on the *Giachino* bus was so much fun: imagine fifty teenagers, boys and girls, laughing and singing mountain songs!

Then it was the first time I put on skis.

Too long to tell, but thrilling. On the bus there was a girl from class B whom I liked: her name was Simonetta.

We sang together, very innocently, for a couple of years.

Two months later, my mother, Luce, was struck by cerebrospinal meningitis and was admitted to the Amedeo di Savoia hospital. I was left alone in the apartment at Corso Emilia 40.

Luckily, Madame Gallina and Madame Comollo were there and invited me to dinner: tajarin with meat sauce and Vercelli-style rice panissa.

My uncles had offered to let me have dinner at their house; but it was too uncomfortable.

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"Come, Caponetti, come in: you have to come with your mother tomorrow. Tell her not to worry: I have something to tell her that will please her," says Sanfilippo.

The next day: "Mrs. Caponetti. We have a scholarship available for a new college in Ivrea, the Europa Institute: very interesting and in the process of being recognized. We must choose."

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The Europa Institute in Ivrea.

The Europa Institute is on Bellavista Hill. It was founded by Adriano Olivetti, who sadly passed away recently, to train young people worthy of entering the brand-new European Parliament in Brussels. In Belgium.

I think of Grandpa Francesco and his five-year-old mine, but it's a very different story.



Beautiful building, beautiful atrium, beautiful corridors, beautiful rooms.

There's a classical high school and a scientific high school.

There are three of us in the third year of classical high school: me, Fulvio Grimoldi from Como, and Patrizia Bonomi from Milan.

There are about forty of us boarders in total, ages thirteen to nineteen.

We have a single room with a bathroom and shower. Impeccable. I settle in and immediately feel at ease.

My mother bought me a light blue terrycloth bathrobe and a garnet-colored plaid dressing gown. My boarding schoolmates have big names: Boatti, Donà Dalle Rose, Montini, Occhipinti. Some are nice, some not.



For dinner at the Europa Institute in Ivrea, you wore a blue blazer and gray pants, well-polished black shoes, and a tie. Otherwise, you wouldn't have dinner.

Well-set round tables; two waiters; the maître d' in a vest and black pants who corrects you: "Mr. Caponetti: tuck your elbows in and don't rest them on the table."

I loved studying *Ancient Greek*. Especially Lysias, an Athenian orator from the 5th century BC.

I had to study his "For the Invalid"; I read and studied it, alone in my room.

I recited it aloud in Ancient Greek, trying to capture the rhythm and sonority of Greek meter. I memorized some passages.



The youngest, there at the boarding school, is Jack Basehart: he's thirteen, tall, blond, and looks a little sad and lonely.

His parents are two famous actors who recently divorced.

His father is Richard Basehart, the Madman in Federico Fellini's 1954 film *La Strada*, which won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1957.

His mother is Valentina Cortese, a diva of Italian cinema.

One evening, after dinner, while I'm studying, Jack knocks on my door. He cries like a child: "They killed my President..."

Kennedy, President of the United States of America, was killed in Dallas.

He throws himself into my arms, and I hold him as if I were his older brother. I, who have never had brothers.

Simonetta and I are now distant. We're breaking up. We're still good friends today.

My mother, Luce, comes to visit me sometimes, taking the bus from Turin and walking the rest of the way.

That day in April, the principal called her: "Mrs. Caponetti. Unfortunately, I have to inform you that the official certification hasn't arrived. Your son will have to take his final exam in Turin, at the D'Azeglio High School."

"No! I'm not going to D'Azeglio as a private student! You promised the official certification with the on-site exam!" I was right.

"Okay: we'll make sure you go to the Gioberti High School, also in Turin."

The final exams.

At the final exams, at Gioberti, the same good grades as the previous year.

The written exams went well, as usual. The day of the oral exams arrives: the entire commission is seated at the very long table.

Let's keep in mind that back then you brought all the subjects to the exam!

The Greek and Latin teacher is sitting in front of me. "Let's start with the speech," she says.

And I breathe a sigh of relief.
"Open to the page... read it there."

It's one of the paragraphs I've memorized! I begin reading in a clear voice; I raise my eyes and recite the Greek from memory.

The commission is amazed.
"Translate."

I begin the literal translation and say: "This is the literal translation, but I would translate it like this in modern Italian, in my own way."

They gave me a nine. All the other oral exams were a breeze.

But they're sending me back to September in Physics.
I'll barely pass. And even today, I still don't understand anything about Physics!

The Faculty of Letters.

After graduating high school, I enrolled at the University of Turin, in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy.

"Enroll in Law, you'll become a lawyer," my mother told me.
She gave me the money to enroll in Law. I went to the office on Via Po.
The line to enroll in Law was endless: almost all men.
At the Literature office, the line was shorter, and almost all women.
I did it my way: I enrolled in Modern Literature.

"What have you done to me?" she asked desperately. "You should have been a lawyer!" "I'll be a journalist, Mom. Like Uncle Gianni's brother."

Uncle Gianni was Aunt Vanda's husband. She and my mother, Luce, were very close. Every summer, I spent at least a month with them in Genoa.

In Literature, in addition to the core exams, there's also the History of Music exam, taught by Massimo Mila, a former partisan.
A tough one. The core text for the exam, always, is Massimo Mila's *Breve storia della Musica*; it still is today.

That year, the course was on Johannes Brahms.

Massimo Mila's assistants were Giorgio Pestelli and the young Enrico Fubini. In the exam, Professor Mila wants to give me an eighteen. I refuse.

The second time, he wants to give me a twenty-one. I refuse.

"Listen, Mr. Caponetti: I'm assigning you a research project on 19th-century Piedmontese folk and cultured song." And I study Abbot Ysler, Angelo Brofferio, and Barùn Litrùn. I learn their 18th- and 19th-century songs in literary Piedmontese dialect.

Laura.



Laura Brezzi, who was at *D'Azeglio* in class D, is also studying at the *Faculty of Letters*.

She likes to sing. We start singing a song, a hundred songs, a thousand songs. We still sing them today, at eighty years old.

I often go to study at their house, at Corso Rosselli 80. I first met her mother, Signora Tina, then her father, engineer Brezzi, from Novara, who works at SIP Società Idroelettrica Piemontese and designs power plants and dams.

A strange and fascinating guy: he's a painter, an amateur musician, and strums every instrument, including a Budrio ocarina as big as a pintone. His passion is cinema, and he made the documentary "Per un pugno di fieno" (A Fistful of Hay) for SIP. He shot the film himself with a 16 mm camera supplied to SIP. He edited it to the appropriate music: Ride of the Valkyries, Rossini's Cinderella, and Ottorino Respighi's *Fountains of Rome.* It will be awarded at prestigious industrial film festivals.

As a guitarist, I joined the group *I Cantimbanchi*, founded by Giampaolo Belly, which performed Resistance songs in ARCI clubs. The seminal concert took place on April 25, 1965, in Siena's Piazza del Campo, packed with thousands of red flags.

I performed a solo song, "Oltre il ponte" (with lyrics by Italo Calvino and music by Sergio Liberovici). I also performed at the Festa dell'Unità on May 1, 1965, in Reggio Emilia.

<i>O ragazza dalle guance di pesca, o ragazza color dell'aurora, io spero che a narrarti riesca la mia vita all'età che tu hai ora.</i>	<i>Copri fuoco, la truppa tedesca la città dominava stiam pronti, chi non vuole chinare la testa con noi prenda la strada dei monti.</i>	<i>Avevamo vent'anni e oltre il ponte, oltre il ponte ch'è in mano nemica, vedevamo l'altra riva, la vita...</i>	<i>...e vorrei che quei nostri pensieri, quelle nostre speranze di allora, rivivessero in quel che tu speri, o ragazza color dell'aurora.</i>
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But the roots that Mamma Luce passed on to me are socialist, not communist. A socialism à la Turati, à la Anna Kuliscioff, à la Edmondo De Amicis.

I understand that *I Cantimbanchi* aren't for me. I'm leaving the group.

I will never perform on stage again as a singer and guitarist.



Also in 1965, to earn some money, I became an external collaborator for UTET, working on the vocabulary of the Dizionario della Lingua Italiana (the Battaglia Dictionary).

With my first earnings, I paid for a few classical guitar lessons and learned how to use my right hand and the barres. I used gut strings and mastered the arpeggio.

Horseback Riding.

Meanwhile, thanks to the early teachings of Colonel Amedeo Vicentini, father of my friend Claudio from Dazeglio, I developed a passion for horseback riding and horses: an overwhelming passion that I still carry with me today. I frequent riding stables and riding schools.

I study the Elementary and Advanced Horseback Riding Manuals.

And also the High School ones.

And books on the History of Equestrian Art.

1965 – 1975.

First phase of Advertising (1967 – 1975).

In 1966, while at the University, I found a permanent job in advertising at AGeM as a *Junior Copywriter*. I was hired with a salary of eighty thousand lire a month.

The Creative Group I belonged to was made up of the already famous Marco Silombria, who was thirty-three years old; graphic designers Pietro Gagliardi, twenty-two, and Silvio Saffirio, twenty-four.

I, twenty-two, was the Junior Copywriter.



I buy my first Fiat 500, in installments at SAVA.

It's beige, but I wanted it in blue, but that was the only color available.

I park it at Corso Emilia 40 and get in: "Mom! I bought the car! Come see it!"

We get out. He looks at it; he doesn't say anything, but he smiles.

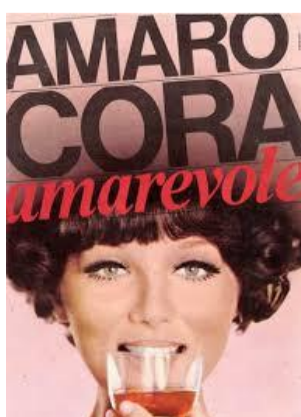
As a *Junior Copywriter* at AGeM, in addition to writing body copies and texts, I immediately began collaborating with Romano Bertola, a famous composer, lyricist, writer, and singer, especially for advertising: for example, "Il Merendero" (Miguel son mi) and "Amarevole" for Amaro Cora.

He liked me, knew I played the guitar, and had me write the first short dialogues between Giulio Bosetti and Gaia Germani for the "Carosello" show "Amaro Cora Amarevole."

Amarevole is a neologism invented by Wilma Cino, *Senior Copywriter* at Ag&M.

The purists protested: "That damned television! It will ruin the Italian language!"

I learned how to write dialogue that wouldn't be cut by the relentless RAI censors.



I enter a Recording Studio for the first time, at *Format* on Via Ventimiglia. The owner is Happy Ruggiero, a musician who also has his own group, Happy Ruggiero and his orchestra, which

performs at the *Lutrario Danze* on Via Stradella. The furnishings are by architect Carlo Mollino, who is designing the new *Teatro Regio* in Turin in Piazza Castello.

I do my first audio direction: me on this side of the glass with sound engineer Alberto Zambenardi, one or two actors on the other side reading my scripts. They are all actors from the *Teatro delle dieci*, under the *Cinema Romano* overlooking the *Galleria Subalpina*: Mario Brusa, Elena Magoja, Franco Alpestre, Franco Vaccaro, Angela Parodi, Giovanni Moretti, and so on.

Many will move to Rome to work at Cinecittà for dubbing.

Having to ask them to repeat or change their intentions, speaking into the intercom, I realize I have a strong Piedmontese accent mixed with Mantuan.

I enrolled in Iginio Bonazzi's diction school on Via Verdi, and went there in the evenings for a good couple of years. Iginio Bonazzi is a charming older actor with a stunning voice and diction, well-known to radio listeners because he's part of the Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana stable company.



Iginio Bonazzi
attore della compagnia
stabile di prosa della
Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana
ha fondato il Centro D
nel 1967

I Creativi Associati.

At a certain point, Piero Gagliardi told me: "In France and America, there are independent creative groups that work for agencies. The agency manages the client's budget, but for the campaigns, it hires the creative group best suited to that product."

In 1967, our Creative Group resigned from AG&M.

We founded *CGSS Caponetti Gagliardi Saffirio Silombria - Creativi Associati* with Pietro Gagliardi, Silvio Saffirio, and Marco Silombria.

It will have its office at Corso Matteotti 30, in a beautiful Art Deco building on the corner of Via Donati.

The fact that my name is first is purely for alphabetical reasons, as Silvio Saffirio suggested. In fact, I'm the youngest and most inexperienced.

We immediately acquired orders from Ferrero for new products and from the FIAT Advertising Office. Other clients arrived. For example, Induyco El Corte Inglés in Madrid, which by volume

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I fell in love with Spain and Jamón *Pata Negra*.

The beard.



At CGSS I also work as a delivery boy and I go to Vagnino to buy the Letraset for Gagliardi and Saffirio, to Ferrua to buy the tempera and aniline paints and brushes for Silombria.

I'm starting to realize the complexity, the culture, the wonder of the profession—or rather, the art—of the Graphic Designer, or, as they say today, Graphic Designer.

Since I have to go to clients, always with a partner, and I have a baby face, to give myself a more professional look, I'm growing a beard. I'll keep it for myself.

In 1969, the CGSS received its first award: the Samia Sipra Prize for the "*Selvaggia Blu*" commercial for the Durando fur coats on Via Roma.

Working with Osvaldo Marini, Nino Bardeggia, and Claudio Meloni. We will edit and synchronize the music at Piercarlo Bosco's studio on Corso Palestro. Running time: 20" (twenty seconds).

<https://patrimonio.archivioluca.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000089926/2/consegna-torino-del-premio-samia-sipra.html&jsonVal=>

La Bomba.

In 1968, *Fiat*, represented by Oddone Camerana, commissioned a very important project that would change my life.

Next year marks the seventieth anniversary of Fiat's founding in 1899.

"We want to narrate the seventieth anniversary in the Fiat Pavilion at the Milan Fair with a sort of multimedia journey: a panel along the inner circumference.

The director is Dr. Massimo Sani."

A sort of multimedia journey: a panel along the inner circumference.

The director is Dr. Massimo Sani.



And there on Corso Marconi, he introduces us to Massimo Sani, documentary filmmaker, journalist, and German correspondent for Epoca, Il Mondo, La Fiera Letteraria, and Il Ponte.

Tall and handsome, his arm is paralyzed by polio, but he carries it with great nonchalance.

His voice is a bit high-pitched but musical, with a delightful Ferrarese accent.

He will be another key person in my life and that of our family.

He lives in Rome, in an Art Nouveau villa sloping down toward the city center amid cascades of jasmine and bougainvillea, with his wife Antonia, a radiant barricade-maker and queen of left-wing culture.

They have three children: Nicola, Valentino, and Benedetto. Nicola is now the Artistic Director of the Accademia Chigiana in Siena.

A professional relationship with Massimo Sani develops into a deep friendship, even though he is sixteen years older than me. A family friendship, or rather, a friendship between families.



That History will be illustrated by Marco Silombria, with layouts by Gagliardi and Saffirio: a three-meter-high panel running the entire circumference of the pavilion.

A visual journey created by Ditta Stagni of Bologna on backlit material. A beauty.

The visitor will explore it, looking at the illustrations, reading the captions, and listening, from panel to panel, to the music of the period.

The architects will be the Milanese Pozzi and Pennacchi.

My job will be to write the lyrics and direct the soundtrack. We choose a studio in Milan, StudioSette on Corso Venezia 7, owned by Franco Cerri, Tito Fontana, and Carlo Bonazzi, Iginio's brother.

Other enduring friendships are born. I find myself in an exciting situation because it's my first major screenplay: a living screenplay.

I'll approach it my way: with great seriousness and passion.

I start writing, but it's not coming; I'm stuck.

I call Massimo Sani, who's in Rome at his home in Parioli. I tell him.

And he says, "The only way to write is to write!" And I write. Even now.

The day before the inauguration, there's the vernissage in our Fiat Pavilion with our 70th anniversary celebrations. Oddone Camerana is there, Massimo Sani is there, the President of the Milan Fair Authority, the architects, and many dignitaries.

And Laura and I are there too, we're getting married soon.

No one will see it, because during the night the Pavilion will be blown up: it will be the Red Brigades' first real bombing. This was in preparation for the December 12, 1969, attack on the Banca Nazionale dell'Agricoltura, which will result in eight deaths.

Here, at least, there will be no death, and the newspapers won't report it. They're talking about it now because the trials are being held in these months. Sixty years later!

July 19, 1969. We get married in our own way.

The ceremony takes place at Vezzolano Abbey.

We are married by Father Berardo Malagola, our religion teacher at D'Azeglio, a Franciscan friar who helped me greatly after my father's death and my mother's long illness and death.

He knows full well that I have lost my faith but that I have another: Faith in Humanity.

That I never go to church, on the contrary, and that I don't like priests and nuns.

Father Berardo tells me: "You don't believe in God, but God believes in you." He has never abandoned me, and I have always tried to deserve it.

There will be very few of us in church: the four witnesses, our dearest friends (Giuseppe Florida, Piero Bianucci, Massimo Firpo, and Elena Ramella); Laura's parents and little sister, along with two couples of their friends. And that's it.

I didn't want to invite the crowd of my relatives. I didn't even invite Madame Gallina and Madame Comollo; and I still regret it, because they deserved it.

Mario Monge, a great photographer who works freelance for the CGSS, will photograph us with his Hasselblad.

We chose Vezzolano Abbey because I used to go there as a child with my parents, walking from the Bardella hamlet of Castelnuovo Don Bosco.

The Abbey, at the time, was closed and semi-abandoned, but my father, through a friend who lived there, managed to get the keys, and we had lunch in the cloister, opening the picnic basket that my mother Luce had prepared with so many delicious things. It has just been restored and opened for worship and the public.



Ore 11.



After the ceremony, we enjoyed standing refreshments at the kiosk in the Abbey churchyard, and then the newlyweds climbed into the light blue Fiat 124 Spider that Marco Silombria lent me.

It's a beautiful day, the top is open, and we return to Turin breathing in the fresh air of our new life. The one we're still living today.

The guests have tied a cheerful set of old cans and saucepans to the rear bumper to keep us company all the way to Turin. And they will follow us in their cars.

1pm.

The wedding reception is at the *Capannina* dei Fratelli Gallina, on Via Donati, a stone's throw from the CGSS. My partners are joining us. Saffirio is with his wife, Anna. Tajarin with meat sauce, braised beef with baked baby potatoes, and crème caramel. With two bottles of Dolcetto di Neive and a great deal of genuine happiness.

Perhaps, at first, Lorenzo Brezzi and Tina were thinking of a more formal wedding for their daughter. But 1968 came along, and many things changed. And they understand and are happy with us.



Via Valfré 18.



We're moving into a large attic with a terrace on Via Valfré and Corso Galileo Ferraris in Turin, in the Cittadella. Renovated by Laura's father and furnished by Marco Silombria, it's very beautiful and bright: five bedrooms arranged in an L-shape (a large central corner living room with two beautiful French windows and a fireplace; to the right, a small study and the bedroom on the first floor).

Via Valfré, on the left is the dining room and kitchen, both with French windows overlooking Corso Galileo Ferraris.

There's no view from the street, and no traffic noise from above. At the end of the corridor is the bathroom, tiny but fully equipped, painted in Chagall blue enamel.

Laura's grandmother Ada, who did not come to the wedding because the Abbey is far from Novara, ci regala i soldi per un *Giradischi*.



I ask Carlo Bonazzi for advice: the best is the B&O Bang & Olufsen.

They don't sell it in Turin yet. Laura and I go to Milan to buy it in the Fiat 500, stow it away, and Laura holds the tuner in her arms.

The speakers are two small Boses. We still have everything in Toscana.

The French windows at Via Valfrè 18 open onto a fantastic L-shaped terrace: eight meters to the right and eight meters to the left, more than two meters deep. It becomes an open-air dining room, a small playground for the children who come over. And a gathering place where we immediately invite many friends.

Laura cooks delicious food: she passed all her Modern Literature exams with a thesis on an author of the History of Gastronomic Literature of the Italian Renaissance.

It was thanks to Gianni Vattimo, the philosopher of Weak Thought.

One evening she was having dinner at our place with Giampiero, known as Zampa: one of the first openly gay couples in Turin. A few years later, Gianni would be the founder of FUORI – the Italian Homosexual United Front.

"I could give you my thesis on Brillat-Savarin and his *Physiologie du Gout*."

One evening, my Milanese musician friends arrived on our terrace: Franco Cerri, Nicola Arigliano, Carlo Bonazzi, and Tito Fontana; the first jam session began at our house, in the first of our homes.

We'll move houses many times, and each one will play and sing.

Only beautiful music.

I still play the guitar, but I don't have time to practice anymore, and I'll slowly give it up.

Francesco Caponetti was born in 1971.

Lorenzo Caponetti was born in 1973.

Turin, however, was now the dormitory city of Fiat, of smog, of the Years of Lead, of the Red Brigades, of riots in the squares and on Corso Galileo Ferraris, of Molotov cocktails.

One day Laura went out with Federico in a baby carrier and Filippo in a stroller:

"I don't want our children to grow up here!"

In 1975, we bought a house in the Freis district of Castelnuovo Don Bosco, where Frèisa was born.

It was a small farmhouse with a lawn and a porch, complete with a stable for a horse; we moved there; I continued to work in Turin at CGSS and traveled back and forth to see customers all over Europe.



I'm buying Camilla, an Anglo-Arabian-Sardinian chestnut, my first owned horse after having ridden a good number of school horses here and there and learned from excellent instructors.

I go for long walks in the hills alone or with friends who have horses around Castelnuovo Don Bosco, also with Gigi Aroasio, who has a country house in Montiglio.

With him and Armando Mosso, we created Il Cavalcavalli, an association for country riding that lasted for forty years. It was dissolved by President Gigi Aroasio only in 2024.



Advertising Phase Two (1975 - 1981).

In 1975, I decided to leave CGSS due to incompatibility with Saffirio: our two characters were too strong, too dominant. Only today, 2026, have we reestablished an excellent relationship.

The situation at CGSS is very tense because the value of the company and therefore my 25 percent stake had to be assessed.

To avoid arguing, we entrusted the matter to an accountant: Alessandro Braja.

The value of my share was substantial for the time. It would be paid in installments over three years.

My former partners will never miss a deadline. We are good people.



Fondo la VIVA – pubblicità e comunicazione in piazza San Carlo 197, prendendo in affitto la mansarda che completamente da ristrutturare. Sopra al Mokita.

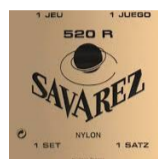
Mi costerà un capitale, ma ne varrà la pena.

Acquisisco subito grandi clienti.

**Jesus
Jeans**



ZUCCHI



Maillot-Savarez in Lyon is a century-old company that, starting from the use of bouveau (pig intestine), produces catgut (suture thread), tennis racket strings and guitar strings.

I know it thanks to Laura Prati Buniva, who is the manager of one of the Group's companies.

I manage its global image. I'm often in Lyon to meet Bernard Maillot, who is my age and has a far-sighted mind.

At one point he says to me: "We also want to produce violin strings. Can you suggest a name and brand?"

In Lyon, I fell in love with Foie Gras and Huitres de Cancale.

A couple of years later, Bernard tells me: "The quality of the strings is excellent now. We need a spokesperson, a prestigious violinist."

"We need Salvatore Accardo," I say.

By chance, I connect with Maestro Accardo, who kindly arranges to meet us in Rome, at his home on Via Stoppani.

Bernard and I arrive there; Bernard has a few sets of Corelli strings in his briefcase.

The Maestro welcomes us personally.

"Coffee?" Mrs. Accardo smiles.

She shows us into the large study dominated by an imposing walnut cabinet. It's armored, fireproof, and maintains a constant temperature and humidity.

The Maestro takes the first violin.

It's the 1718 *Firebird Stradivarius*, which belonged to the Saint-Exupéry family.

He takes the other one: a *Guarneri del Gesù*.

"Here's your coffee," says the lady, entering with coffee and biscuits. Bernard takes two sets of Corelli strings from his briefcase, with the logo and packaging I designed. I get the shivers.

Maestro Accardo removes the strings from the two violins, re-strings the Corellis, and tests them. There are only the three of us in his studio on Via Stoppani.

The Maestro plays for two hours: Paganini, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Beethoven, Max Bruch.

Corellis will forever have the tagline "Choix Accardo." They're sold all over the world.

The machinùn.

I travel a lot: my office is in Turin, but I'm often in Milan, where I stay at the Hotel Manin and I often go to Lyon. My home is in the Freis district of Castelnuovo Don Bosco. I need a fast car.



I'm buying an *Alfa Romeo GTV 2000*.

When I get home, Laura looks at it and says, "What a car!" and turns up her nose a little. But we bought a Renault R4 for her.

Great Milan.

It's a wonderful, whirlwind, overwhelming, fantastic time. It's the moment of Milan at its peak, culturally and artistically.

I know Philippe Daverio, Enrico Baj, the *Galleria Marconi*.

And there's Patrizia.

Boom!! Boom!!!

Brada and Veronica are born.

I'm shocked. But I do it my way: I recognize them at the Milan Courthouse.

They will bear their mother's surname: Barassi.

Patrizia Barassi's daughters will be Brada Barassi and Veronica Barassi.

The Great Crisis.

In 1980, at thirty-five, I entered a personal crisis due to excessive stress, from everything; but never drugs, only cigarettes; I wanted to quit advertising and change my life completely.

I talked about it with Patrizia. I talked about it at length with Laura. We longed for a life in nature, horses and horseback riding, music and communication in all its forms, children growing up in the countryside. And Laura's cooking, since in the meantime she had graduated in Modern Literature with a thesis on Renaissance gastronomic literature.

And, again, I did it my way.

I sold off VIVA.

In 1981, I attended the first Pony Instructor course promoted by Cav. Vittorio Orlandi, who founded the Pony Club Fiorello Italia at Albert Moyersoen's stables in Longora (Melegnano). About twenty candidates signed up.

I obtained License No. 1 Pony Instructor certification issued in Italy. In 1982, I founded the Fiorello Torinese Pony Club. The City of Turin granted me the use of the side yard of Palazzo a Vela, unused since Italia 61.

I hired a dozen Haflinger horses bred in Baraggia by the Del Mastro Calvetti family.

In 1983, commissioned by the Haflinger Horse Breeders' Association, I organized my first horse show at the *Fieracavalli* in Verona with a group of young students riding Haflinger horses.

In 1984, the Tale of the Haflinger took center stage at the *Fieracavalli* in Verona. Fifty girls and boys rode 50 golden chestnut ponies, accompanied by music by Offenbach.

The largest contingent was represented by students from the Pony Club Fiorello Torinese, which is recognized by the Italian Equestrian Sports Federation (FISE), but young riders from other Italian Pony Clubs who ride Haflingers also participated.



At the same time, on behalf of Philip Morris, I invented and organized the Muratti Adventure on horseback, a non-competitive orienteering and endurance race to be held in Maremma in June 1984 between Castiglione della Pescaia and the Petriolo estate; one hundred riders (fifty pairs from all over Italy). Three days of competition and three evenings of dinner and bivouacs on some of the most beautiful estates in the Maremma Grossetana.



To organize it and study the itinerary, I stay in Maremma for a long time, often returning to my family in the hamlet of Freis and also frequently going to Rome to the FISE for its new institutional commitments.

In 1984, I was appointed by the Italian Equestrian Sports Federation (FISE) to promote equestrianism among young people nationwide. I held this position until 1988. I began commuting to Rome, Viale Tiziano, to the Palazzo delle Federazioni.



I traveled by car, train, and plane. I established contacts and personally visited many of Italy's most important riding schools. I was appointed Federal Instructor.

Luci a San Siro.

In 1985, I hit my forties: I couldn't stand that life between Turin and the Milan that wasn't yet the Milan of the future. It was the metropolis of Enrico Baj, of Philippe Daverio, of the young Roberto Vecchioni who wrote *Luci a San Siro*.

I pass by it every week, beside the hill of war rubble that's being transformed into a park: I speed by in my Alfa GTV. Patrizia is there. Brada and Veronica are born.

I tell Laura right away.

Our marriage is already in crisis for other reasons beyond my control. Now it's over, perhaps.

We talk about it at length, with Laura. I talk about it at length with Patrizia.

I decide my way, and it's not the most painful decision of my life: I'll stay with Laura, as I swore to Father Berardo.

I'm selling VIVA, we're selling the Freis farmhouse in Castelnuovo Don Bosco.

We're going to live in Maremma.

1985. We move to Maremma. A family on the road.



L'arrivo in Maremma sarà progressivo.

Con bambini e cavalli passiamo un'estate a Villa Fonte Farneta a Bibbiena, concessa dai conti Guicciardini.

Poi un'estate alla Tenuta di Bagnolo, fra Siena e Grosseto, del *Lloyd Adriatico*.

Infine ci trasferiamo in un'azienda agricola nella Maremma grossetana, a *Poggialto di Cupi* (Alberese) ai bordi del

Parco dell'Uccellina, su un poggio che si affaccia sulla pianura e sul golfo, con lo sguardo che arriva fino a Castiglion della Pescaia e a Punta Ala.

Nasce la Scuola di Equitazione di *Poggialto* nella quale si formeranno molti giovani cavalieri. Laura cucina per tutti e anche per qualche altro ospite.

The Maremmano Horse.

In 1987, commissioned by the National Association of Maremma Horse Breeders, I hosted the first presentation of the Maremma Butteri at the Fieracavalli in Verona.

For the first time, the Butteri of the Tuscan Maremma, those of the Lazio Maremma, and those of the Pontine Marshes entered the fray.

I knew all the Butteri. We would be lifelong friends.

I developed a great friendship with Paolo Mariotti, a landowner and breeder from Montalto di Castro who also had a stud farm in Vulci, which had not yet become an Archaeological and Environmental Park. It would become one thanks to him and Carlo Falzetti.



Maremma and Buffalo Bill 1990.

In March 1890, the legendary showdown between Buffalo Bill's cowboys and the cowboys of the Pontine countryside took place in Rome, in the arena of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.

In 1990, commissioned by the Grosseto Department of Tourism, Councilor Milvio Parentini, I created, directed, and hosted "Maremma and the Wild West," Councilor Milvio Parentini. This spectacular live show, "One Day in Principina a Mare," took place on the estate at the Talamone campsite. The show, held over three days in Principina a Mare and Talamone, attracted around a hundred Maremma cowboys and horsemen, and thousands of spectators in the stands. The arena, measuring 150 by 100 meters, was fenced with chestnut strips.

The event was broadcast live for two hours on Linea Verde RAI1, hosted by Federico Fazzuoli, and was also extensively broadcast simultaneously on RAI2 and RAI3. It was mentioned in the news. The deployment of the RAI crews was impressive: buses, generators, Jeeps. They had to go to Maremma, so they needed a Jeep! Otherwise, what kind of Maremma would it be?



I've hired a troupe of twelve Camargue cascadeurs and dressed them up as Indians.

Francesco (sixteen years old) brings a group of cowboys from an association that organizes rodeos for charity. They come from various states in America. They're eight big men dressed as cowboys. They arrive in Poggialto, bringing their saddles with them.

They're always dressed as cowboys, always wearing Stetsons, and we host them for five days in Poggialto. One of them, Randy Weaver, every morning, wearing his Stetson, cooks a hundred scrambled eggs on Laura's stove, who jokes with him.

Laura speaks excellent British English.

In the show, Francesco plays Buffalo Bill on a cascadeur horse, Lorenzo is at the music console, and Chiara drives a buggy harnessed to a Falabella pony.

About three hours of total performance over three days. I'm the good host and ride, microphone in hand. Jerax di Luriano, a stunning Persian bay horse bred by Alduino Ventimiglia di Monteforte on the Luriano estate of the Marquises Misciattelli Chigi Zondadari.

Jerax will be entrusted to me for the next few years, and I will ride him for walks and trips.

TO BE WATCHED WHILE LISTENING TO THE AUDIO (DURATION 20 MINUTES)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0oBP216Z6c&t=234s> (ascoltare audio)

CHEVAL PASSION AT AVIGNON, 1991.



In 1991, I curated the show for the Maremma Knights Association, founded by Paolo Mariotti, at Cheval Passion, a spectacular horse fair in Avignon created by Pierre Lapouge, who also directed it.

Another great new friend, Pierre Lapouge, *le Commodore!*.



THE FIRST FISE HORSE RIDING MANUAL IN VIDEO.

Between 1989 and 1990, on behalf of the Italian Sports Federation (FISE), I wrote and directed the encyclopedic Manual of Horsemanship in Video, produced by RCA Columbia Pictures and the Italian Sports Federation (FISE). The FISE director is Felicetta Rossitto. The technical contact for the texts is General Giovanni Grignolo.



It is the world's first Manual of Horsemanship in Video: a series of seven forty-five-minute videocassettes, for a total of approximately six hours of screening time, sold in bookstores and newsstands throughout Italy (awarded for best educational work at the International Sports Film Festival, Turin 1991).

Two years of monumental effort: filming at the federal centers of Pratoni del Vivaro, Passo Corese (military), in numerous riding schools, and at sporting events. Six months of editing in slow motion at Cinecittà. Awarded Best Educational Work at the 1993 International Sports Film Festival. My father-in-law Lorenzo Brezzi will collect the award because I can't go. I'm in a cast again due to another fracture from a fall from a horse. I'm used to it now.

Linea Verde and Airone.



Throughout the 1980s, I frequently collaborated with Linea Verde RAI and the Airone magazine, drawing and following horseback riding itineraries in Italy.

Court-appointed Technical Consultant for the Grosseto Court.

During the same period, I served as *Court-appointed Technical Consultant* for the Grosseto Court for the horse and equestrian sector. The presiding judge is Gaetano Dragotto, and the *Public Prosecutor* is Pietro Federico.

Big Events – *Piazza di Siena.*

On behalf of the Italian Equestrian Federation (FISE), I direct and present spectacular sideshows at several major international equestrian events, including the European Eventing Championships at Pratoni del Vivaro and the International Dressage Championships in Rome.



In 2006-2007, in collaboration with Caterina Vagnozzi of the Press Office, I served as an on-site speaker and host of the awards ceremony at the closing evening of the CSIO - International Equestrian Competition in *Piazza di Siena* in Rome.

Sardegna Cavalli.

In 1990-91-92, I was the director and speaker of *Sardegna Cavalli* in Oristano and of the Regional Breeding Award of the *Sardinian Horse Breeding Institute* led by Diego Satta.

I collaborated with Bebo Ardu, Vanni Fadda, and Salvatore Migheli.



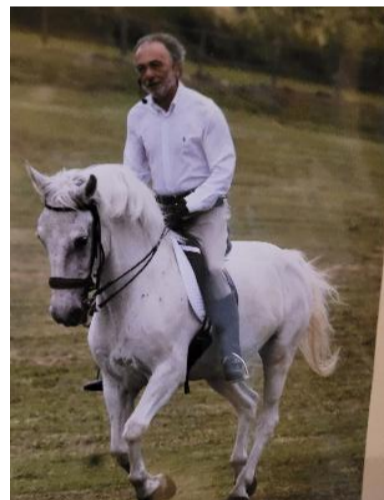
They say that with the people of Sardinia, especially if they are Horse People, it's difficult to make friends and be accepted. We're still here, me in Turin and them there: a united group, as strong as the rocks of Gennargentu. Diego has written magnificent books about his homeland. I recommend *Ittiri fustialbos*. And his books of poetry in the Sardinian language. He still plays the guitar, and it was he who taught me *No potho reposare*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciKuuilHr98>

The Voice.



Caricature di Paolo Pantalei



Qualcuno mi soprannomina scherzosamente *il Pippo Baudo dei cavalli*, qualcun altro incomincia a definirmi *La voce del Cavallo Italiano*.

IL "CAROSELLO ITALIANO".



In 1993, for the AIA (Italian Breeders' Association) (Ministry of Agricultural, Forestry and Livestock Resources), I created the Carosello Italiano format at the Fieracavalli in Verona with Silvana Gioia.

There are twenty Italian horse and donkey breeds: each breed sends its own representative, of varying size, to Fieracavalli. Overall, the presence in Verona varied between two hundred and three hundred horses each year.

Each breed had its own "curtain" lasting several minutes with appropriate music. I directed and hosted the event from 1993 to 2011 (that is, for more than twenty consecutive years), showcasing all the Italian horse breeds in a show format with appropriate music.

Sometimes riding the most beautiful horses in Italian breeding, with a headband or handheld radio microphone.



CASA CAPONETTI IS BORN IN TUSCANIA.

In 1994, we purchased a farm in Tuscania, in the Maremma region of Lazio, in the Marta River valley: fifty pristine hectares that include a vast Etruscan necropolis, large olive groves, and vast pastures for horses. The entire family moved to Tuscania. Casa Caponetti was born.



CASA CAPONETTI TUSCANIA



The renovations, the creation of the stables, paddocks, and guest rooms, will take years and years, requiring enormous costs and a tremendous commitment from Francesco and Lorenzo, while Chiara is enrolled in the scientific high school in Tuscania. Giorgio is often traveling for his assignments.

Casa Caponetti is starting to take shape.



Laura launches Laura's Cooking School - Tuscania Italy, which for nearly twenty years will welcome food lovers eager to learn about Italian cuisine and olive oil. They come from all over the world: mostly Americans, but also Germans, Dutch, Swedes, and so on. And many Japanese women and men (one even always in kimono).



Summer Riding courses.

During the summer, as in *Poggialto*, Casa Caponetti hosts riding courses for young people. Entrust yourself to excellent instructors selected by Giorgio. The first was Massimo Olivetti, followed by several other young instructors, all certified by the Pony Club Italia or the FISE (Italian Riding Federation). This same tradition will continue for years at Casa Caponetti.

Documentaries for the Italian Navy.



In 1997, I made the documentary "The Last Ladies of the Sea" for the Italian Navy (Honorable Mention at the Military Communication Festival) and in 1998, "Distant Oceans" (*Senate President's Cup in Rome 1998*). The Navy's Deputy Press Office is Commander Cristiano Patrese. The Commander of MARIVELA is Admiral Di Giovanni.

The "*Ladies of the Sea*" are the sailing vessels of our Navy. For the video, I spent extensive time aboard military ships, including the Amerigo Vespucci and the Palinuro, as well as other vessels.

Much of the filming is done from the Navy helicopter, on which I am aboard with two military operators, with the doors open. When I'm on the Amerigo Vespucci, I sleep for two nights in the

Chaplain's apartment, with a private bathroom. It's tradition for guests to climb aboard by climbing up the ladder with their shoulder bag, carrying a good bottle of wine for the Officers' Lounge. I even threw in a bottle of *Armagnac*. And I'm in my sixties.

The documentary will film all of our Navy's sailing vessels at sea. Between embarkations and flights, I've accumulated countless hours of shipboard experience and helicopter flight experience. And a wealth of valuable experience. Other documentaries for the Navy will include "*Distant Oceans*" and "*Marshals of the Sea*."



C.A.E. - Army Aviation Center.



In 1998, it was the turn of a documentary for the Army Aviation Center, based in Viterbo and at the time the largest concentration of military helicopters in Italy.

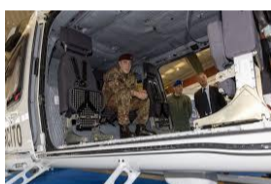
The filming was carried out by Provideo during a large event at the base, attended by a large audience, where dozens of helicopters of all models took to the skies.

Giorgio also asked General Massimo Dal Piaz, commander of the Center, to fly a *Mangusta* over the Tuscania valley to complete the

video.

A few days later, the *Mangusta* circled over Casa Caponetti to allow filming and landed on the lawn.

The flight of the helicopters, set to the music of the waltz from Gounod's *Faust*, became a phantasmagorical aerial ballet. The title was *The Knights of the Air*.



TERRA COME ARTE. EARTH AS ART.



Also in 1998, I was commissioned by the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Viterbo to develop the Terra come Arte project, which aims to create artistic events that highlight the aesthetic significance of farmers' interventions in the land.

The idea came from Carlo Perone Pacifico, dean of the Faculty, with the creative and artistic contribution of Franco Carlo Ricci, professor of History of Music at the University of Tuscia.

The event will run for four years.

The logo was designed by Daniela Piscitelli, Professor of Graphic Design at University of Naples, wife of my son Francesco and mother of my grandchildren Filippo e Federico Caponetti.



NITRITI DI PRIMAVERA - NATIONAL ITALIAN HORSE FAIR.

Since 2003, with the *Compagnia Maremmana Eventi* of Tuscany, along with Gabriella Ascenzi and Domenico Germoni, I have been the creator and director of *Nitriti di Primavera* – National Italian Horse Fair in Tuscany.

It ran for six years, featuring many of Italy's leading breeds. On a slightly smaller scale, it replicates the formula of the Carosello Italiano at the Fieracavalli in Verona and sees the participation of around three hundred horses each year.



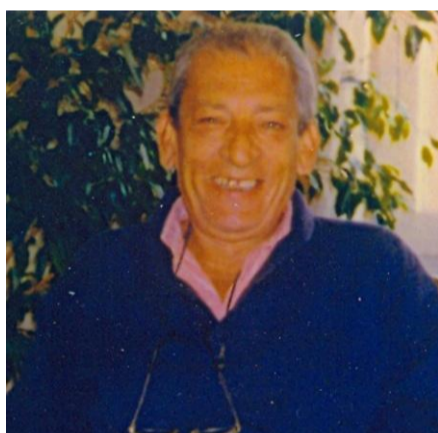
University Professor.



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DELLA
TUSCIA



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



From 2004, as a Full Professor, I teach Ethology (*Management of Wildlife and Livestock Resources*) in the three-year degree program in *Environmental Planning and Management*.

It is an interuniversity program between the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Tuscia and the Faculty of Architecture of the Sapienza University of Rome.

The Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture is Carlo Perone Pacifico, a distinguished economist from the University of Naples.

In 2009, I was the Italian speaker at the international conference "*Turkmen Horse and Horse Breeding in the Art World*," in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

I have never received a doctorate, but now I am a Full Professor.

I held this position for four academic years.

In 2010, I turned 65 and left all my roles: directing, performing, presenting, working at the university, and consulting.

I also decided to stop riding due to the many fractures I'd sustained during my long equestrian career.

I make new friends, like the one with Roberto Notarbartolo di Villarosa, a noble naval officer of very noble origins.

The first *Notar Bartolo* was the administrator of the estates of Frederick II of Swabia, the *Stupor Mundi*, in the 12th century. The Emperor, after conquering Sicily, named him Duke and granted him an immense, charming territory.

Today Roberto is among my dearest friends, alongside Gigi and Carlo: a great legacy of wealth for me.

His wife, Veronica, is committed to charitable works and is one of the most beloved ladies in Milan.

They help me remember every day that I was fortunate enough to be born *N.H. Nobilis Homo* and that nobility does not compromise.

THE WRITING.

Finding myself free from commitments, so as not to get bored in Tuscania, I set about writing a story that has enthralled, intrigued, and troubled him for decades. He began the incipit and first chapters years ago, never having had the time to finish them.

It's a story that takes place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, at the moment when the engine supplanted the horse, changing the course of human history, and when we see dozens of car factories opening. Including Fiat. With some mysterious deaths.

The incipit says:

Once upon a time, there were four Knights.

The first Knight was named Federigo Caprilli. A Cavalry officer, he would become the greatest equestrian champion of all time.

The second Knight was named Emanuele Cacherano di Bricherasio. A former cavalry officer, he would found the most important Italian automobile manufacturer.

The third Knight was named Giovanni Agnelli. A former cavalry officer, he would become the greatest Italian industrialist and financier.

The Fourth Horseman was my grandfather.

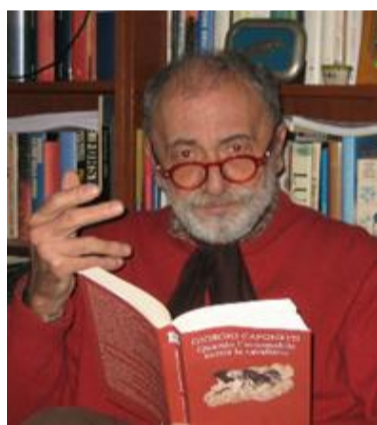
When the Automobile Killed Cavalry was published by Marcos y Marcos in 2011.

Today it is at the twenty-fourth edition.

The launch took place at the *Fieracavalli* in Verona, my last *Fieracavalli*.

Class Horse TV.

In 2012, the television channel Class Horse TV produced and broadcast *I racconti di Caponetti*, hosted by Barbara Leoni: fourteen programs featuring readings from the novel, filmed in the living room of *Casa Caponetti* and in my studio in Tuscania.



PUBLISHED BOOKS

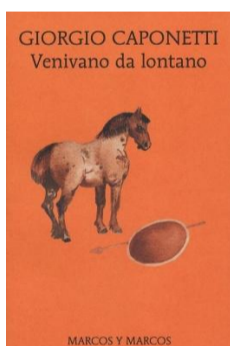
2011 – 2026



Mym 2011



Mym 2013



Mym 2014



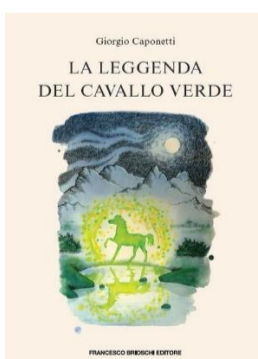
Mym 2015



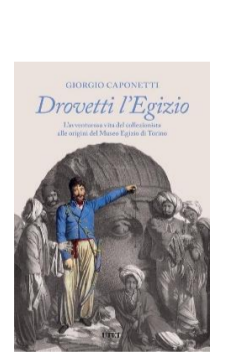
Mym 2017



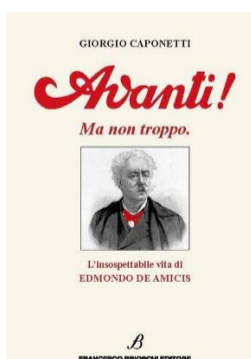
UTET 2018



Francesco Brioschi 2019



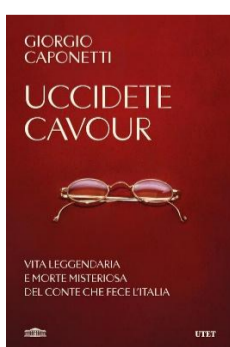
UTET 2020



Francesco Brioschi 2020

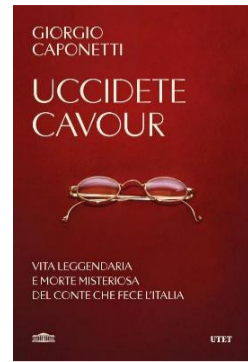
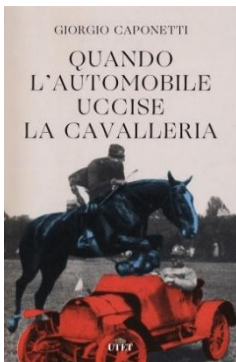


UTET



UTET 2026

I MISS TRANSLATIONS!



Publication date: 2011, Marcos Y Marcos, Milan.
498 pages.

18 editions, Marcos Y Marcos.
From 2022, Utet, four editions.
Active.

A gallop through history.
Three characters: a knight, an industrialist, a nobleman.
And my grandfather.

Publication date: 2015, Utet, Milan.
390 pages.

16 Utet editions.
Active.

The greatest financier of the twentieth century. And his wife Cesarina. Patrons of the arts.
A fairy tale with a happy ending.

Publication date: March 2026.
260 pages.

First edition: March 2026. 3 editions as of May 2026.

The Great Statesman and His Mysterious Death.
The Unification of Italy. The Flavor of an Era: the Italian Belle Époque.

LA STAMPA



In 2024, the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper La Stampa, Gianni Armand Pilon, asked me to contribute an occasional piece to the newspaper's "Turin" section, writing for a new column he was planning, titled "Gran Torino." He would collaborate with editor Giuseppe Salvaggiulo, who introduced me. I liked the idea; I immediately liked Gianni and Giuseppe: "Yes, I would be happy to!" "Ours is a great team, and I'm proud of it."



Our golden sunset.



For four or five years, Laura and I have been living back in Turin, our city, the one where we studied at the D'Azeglio Academy and at the University.

Goodbye, Tuscania, after thirty years: and, as De André says, ... and so many memories, and not a single regret.

In fact, we're reunited with all our old and dear friends, with whom we never parted, even though we lived far away. We live in Porta Palazzo, where I was born, with a wonderful 360-degree view.

Laura goes grocery shopping near the farmers' house. I go for walks in my Turin and have coffee in the Galleria in the morning, and coffee and an aperitif in the afternoon.

We often go out to dinner with friends. We know all the trattorias in the *Balùn* area.

We're invited everywhere to our book presentations. We make new friends.





***Because life begins today.
Always.***

GIORGIO CAPONETTI 2026