



Etruscan News

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Remembering Mario Del Chiaro...

1925-2020

by Lisa C. Pieraccini

Mario Del Chiaro, the pioneer of Etruscan art and archaeology in the US, passed away at his home in Santa Barbara California on November 14, 2020. He was 95 years old. Mario's story is special: born in San Francisco in 1925, he was the son of Italian immigrants who left Italy to seek the American dream. He entered the

US Army-Air Force during WWII when he was only 17 years old. After service he received funding through the GI Bill which allowed him to pursue higher education. Mario started his university studies in 1949 at the University of California Berkeley and earned a BA, MA and PhD in the newly founded History of Art Department. Mario was one of the first PhDs (if not the first) in the department, and his dissertation was on an Etruscan topic, "The Genucilia Group" *continued on page 48*

DIS MANIBUS SACRUM



Etruscan Mario brothers, California, 2013.



In Memoriam Mario Torelli

1937-2020

by Stephan Steingräber

On September 15 Mario Torelli passed away in the heart of baroque Sicily, in Donnalucata di Sicli near Ragusa. He was 83 years old, but in spite of several health problems during the last decades, the sad message of his death was a surprise for many colleagues and friends, as he was still very active pre- *continued on page 52*

collections dating from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

A series of terracotta plaques from the site of the SS. Stimmate at Velletri hold a special position in the exhibition, and the best preserved example has been chosen as the logo of the event (Fig. 1).

It is therefore astounding that this very object, known by scholars for over 200 years, still hid a surprise—and what a surprise!—which is now presented here for the

first time to the readers of *Etruscan News*. The discovery is due to the keen eagle eye of Gary Enea, *Etruscan News*' long-time layout editor, who never stops at the surface of things.

Discovery and history of the plaques

As early as 1784, during the renovation of the church of S. Maria della Neve at Velletri (also known as "delle SS. Stimmate di S. Francesco"), an excavation un-

earthed architectural terracottas of an Archaic temple, including a number of relief plaques with traces of painting. These were soon (and wrongly) labelled the "Volscian reliefs" and entered the collection of antiquities of the Borgia family, under the auspices of the learned and powerful Cardinal Stefano Borgia. After a first restoration, they were published by Filippo Angelo Becchetti with colored watercolors by the painter *continued on page 6*



Fig.1.Terracotta Plaque from Velletri, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli Inv. 21595.

An important Etruscan exhibition is currently on display at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale of Naples, although the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic make it currently impossible to visit the show in person. "Gli Etruschi e il MANN" recounts the relationship between the museum of Naples and Etruscan culture, through 600 objects including archaeological contexts from Latium and Campania, as well as material from historical Italian

Hidden in Plain Sight

A surprising discovery on a terracotta plaque from Velletri featured in the exhibition "Gli Etruschi e il MANN"

Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli
(2020-2021)

by Daniele F. Maras

ETRUSCAN NEWS

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Dear Editors:

Grazie anzitutto per quanto comunichi di Etruscan News e desidero esprimerti anzitutto il più vivo compiacimento per l'iniziativa di proseguire il prezioso impegno profuso dalla cara Larissa Bonfante che ricordo volentieri sia come studiosa, sia anche per la sua puntuale presenza e attenzione per ogni nuova iniziativa promossa a Villa Giulia, nel territorio dell'Etruria meridionale e non solo.

Anna Maria Moretti Sgubini
Roma

Dear Editors:

I am putting a few words together because I would like to honor Larissa.

Creativity, freedom, individuality, naturalness, simplicity, spontaneousness are all words a variety of writers have used to describe the Etruscans. I can use these words to describe Larissa. From the time I was with Jane at Spannocchia and worked with her team at La Piana, I have been attending Etruscan events as well as visiting Etruscan sites. This is now 25 years ago and it was at one of these seminars that I met Larissa and she, with all her commitments, writing and teaching was so welcoming and encouraging to me and our daughter, Kim. I am now surrounded by her books and just last night was reading one of the last, *Giuliano Bonfante and Historical Linguistics*. I particularly like "A Daughter's Memories"...and now you are working on more writings that will continue her legacy.

Photo at left, Barbara's boars betwixt the books.

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Etruscan Interest Group at the A.I.A annual meeting in Washington D.C., January 2020.
We don't have to name names. You all know who you are!

That is why I am grateful to you for printing in The *Etruscan News* the picture of our grandson, Marshall, who with his 3D printing made a copy of the sarcophagus in Perugia. Now he has made one of the Porcellino from Florence. If you ask any of our five grandchildren my chief interest, they would all say, "the Etruscans" ... so the seeds have been planted and are growing.

Another grandson, Peter, is now a sophomore at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland. I was most fortunate to visit him last in early March, just before we became housebound. Peter immediately took me to The Cleveland Museum of Art and directly to the Etruscan Collection, which is outstanding. The family had previously gifted me a replica of an Etruscan Boar (see photo) which the head curator of Ancient Civilizations is now suggesting has a different background. The additional objects there include a boar pendant...and so many other things. So the Etruscans are alive and well within our family. Daughter Kim still enjoys the Etruscan room in her Boulder home...and we have so much here.

In the very large picture, Larissa will continue to be our important bridge to Italy and to the Etruscans. She certainly lives on in her many books and contributions in many ways and her spirit continues to inspire me.

Barbara Martini Johnson
Minneapolis

Dear Editors:

Musings about Larissa: Many of you might not know that Larissa was born in Naples, Italy (bella Napoli). When she came to visit me two years ago, I introduced her as a Neapolitan. I cannot tell you how much joy that elicited from the various people she met. Everyone took pride in the fortunate circumstances of her birth and attributed her genius and sympathetic character to being Neapolitan. Even a taxi driver, when questioned as to where she was from said, "she's Neapolitan, you can see it in her face and in her soul." Another Neapolitan engaged her in a conversation regarding the meaning of "troia." In Naples, the word is derogatory, indicating a woman of loose morals. Larissa explained that in Sicily, the surname "Troia" was quite common and it harkened back to the remembrance of the glorious city of Troy and Aeneas' subsequent arrival on the island of Sicily.



EOS - Etruscans on the Sea: survey on the Etruscan city of Spina

by Elisabetta Govi and Andrea Gaucci

EOS, a project to study Etruscans on the Sea, is organized by the Chair of Etruscology of the Department of History and Cultures of the University of Bologna. It aims at investigating the Etruscan settlements of the Po Delta, Spina and Adria. The acronym evokes the Greek goddess of the Dawn, represented kidnapping young men on the red-figure Athenian vases of the graves of Spina.

Currently, the main focus of EOS is Spina, the Etruscan city that ruled the Adriatic Sea and had privileged relations with Greece. Its discovery represents one of the most important pages of Italian archaeology of the twentieth century. Hidden by the lagoons of the Po Delta for centuries, this harbor, famous among ancient historians and geographers for its role on the Adriatic Sea, was brought back to light in the period between the 1920s and 1960s. The long-lasting commitment of the University of Bologna to research on the Etruscan city has ancient roots and starts with Nereo Alfieri, Professor of Ancient Topography, previously Director of the Ferrara Museum and, in the 1950s and 1960s, excavator of the necropolis of Valle Pega.

Since 2007, Giuseppe Sassatelli and now Elisabetta Govi have started the systematic study of the necropolis of Valle Trebba, which had been excavated between 1922 and 1935 and then in 1962 by Alfieri. This is the northernmost funerary area of the city; it extends into the sandy islands emerging in the lagoon, between the city to the west and the sea to the east. With the ancient landscape of the necropolis already reconstructed, the study of the 1,215 graves excavated up to 1935 is being completed and with hope it will soon be finally published.



Fig.1

Since 2020 EOS has another aim: investigating the ancient settlement of the city (Fig. 1), of which we still know so little, starting with the location of the harbor and sacred buildings, prominent in Etruscan cities. We aim to understand the urban grid, the internal and external viability along with the relationship between the settlement and the necropoleis, and possibly to identify sacred places. This project will be possible thanks to the funding of the Municipality of Comacchio, leader of the European project VALUE-environmental And cultUral hEritage development, which involves 5 Italian partners (the Municipality of Comacchio, the Veneto Region, the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Regional Po Delta Park of Veneto and the agency DELTA 2000) and 3 Croatian partners (the municipalities of Kastela, Korcula and Cres).

The primary task of EOS is to investigate the site through non-invasive methods. Although limited by the COVID-19 restrictions, we have been able to organize the first archaeological campaign, which took place October 5-23, 2020. Under the direction of Prof. Govi, the research group (Fig. 2) includes researchers and technicians, as well as research fellows, PhD students, students of the School of Specialization in Archaeological Heritage and Students of the two-year Master's degree in Archaeology and Cultures of the Ancient World.

Indeed, EOS is also teaching. In the past years many students have had the chance to study first hand the grave goods of Valle Trebba and now are walking through the fields that were once the cityscape of Spina. During the first campaign, the research group was engaged for three weeks in the valli (in the local dialect: flat territories bordered by low hillocks created by

rivers) around Spina. The methods used did not involve excavations, but only extensive field-walking within a wide area of about 28 sq km. Such activities had the essential support of the Consorzio di Bonifica Pianura di Ferrara and of the University of Ferrara.

Since there is no modern settlement on the site, it has been possible to apply numerous non-invasive methods, such as UAV photogrammetry, geophysics (in particular magnetometry), and field survey (Figs. 3-4). These will make it possible to identify traces of buried structures and geomorphological evidence.

The planned goal for the next campaign, which we hope will take place in the early months of 2021, will be to apply geophysics in the areas identified as of greatest interest through field survey. The scheduled activities will point out the most remarkable areas to investigate through shovel tests and wider excavations.



Fig.3



Fig.2



Fig.4