

News-Record  
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SMARTEN UP  
@ The South Orange-Maplewood Adult School

### 'GOTCHA' IN ANY LANGUAGE

I know the precise moment when it hit me, this deep longing to speak Italian.

It was in Milan, teeming with rain on that Wednesday last month, as we were feeling our way through city streets also teeming with Vespas, vehicles, and fearless pedestrians. We rounded a blind corner and suddenly the enormous, ethereal Duomo Cathedral of Milan appeared in our rain-streaked windshield.

A Gothic confection reaching heavenward since the turn of the 14th century, an impossibly delicate, lacy wedding cake made of brilliant white Candoglia marble, the Duomo towers over its own block-square cobblestone piazza -- across which we were now blithely bumping in our rented Audi.

And **only** us. Not another car in sight. For good reason. "**ZTL**," the small sign up front would have warned us, had we noticed it through the pouring rain. **ZTL**, we've since learned, means "*Zona Traffico Limitato*," not too difficult to translate; just difficult to see in the first place.

Later, consulting a guide book for hindsight, we learned that ZTL is "***the worst and most common infraction committed by foreigners. ZTL means limited traffic zone. Replace the word limited with restricted and you begin to get the picture. ZTLs are present in most historical city centers throughout Italy. Unlike the highways where everything is clearly marked, you have to look for ZTL signs. The sign is a red letter O on a white background, much like a do not enter sign. They are usually small and placed at intersections above or near traffic lights where you may turn in another direction to avoid crossing that ZTL checkpoint.***"

No see, no turn. So on we blundered, in thrall to Milan's astonishing architectural treasure, bouncing across the vast -- and sacrosanct -- piazza, oblivious to the astonished Milanese waving at us from the shelter of the adjacent arcade.

Our reaction: **1.** "Duh! Can we really be such *Innocents Abroad!*" And **2.** "Shall we all take Italian classes when we get home?"

The answer to *both* questions: ***The South Orange-Maplewood Adult School.*** We flew into Newark on a Friday and by Tuesday evening were soaking up the melodious flow of a Romance language that totally lives up to the name. Professor Fil Secci, our teacher, is a native speaker, hailing from a small town not far from Naples. So we're learning the tongue straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

Equally enriching: we're learning about the Italian way of life, the culture and customs and attitudes that add up to *La Dolce Vita* for some 60-million Italian speakers.

*Beginner Italian* runs for 10 classes this fall. And come spring, there's *Continuing Italian* and *Italian Conversation* conducted entirely in Italian. No more staining after subtitles in old Fellini movies. No more ordering the wrong thing at Libretti's in Orange.

But there is more to come, we've also learned from the guidebook. ***"Once you have crossed the TZL, even for a second, it's too late. Your picture was automatically taken. Your license plate was crosschecked against a database of sanctioned vehicles and you will be fined. ZTL cameras are only aimed at those entering restricted zones. At this point you might as well fully enjoy your crime and cruise around the restricted zone for the rest of your vacation."***

**Gotcha! snapshots are not exclusive to TZLs,** as award-winning New Jersey photojournalist Jim DelGiudice will prove next Wednesday, Oct. 21, when he delivers the autumn **Eva Samo Lecture** honoring the Adult School's consultant and 50-year supporter.

An adjunct assistant professor at County College of Morris and a frequent lecturer at Drew and Columbia Universities, DelGiudice's talk is called **"Gotcha! Snapshots that Changed History."**

He defines snapshots as "moments captured on camera purely by luck" that often become iconic images, "not only transcending a moment in time, but becoming the memory of that moment," DelGiudice says. Examples he cites include the photos of the Hindenburg exploding; of the fireman raising the flag in the ruins of the World Trade Center on September 11; of Monica Lewinsky hugging Bill Clinton in a receiving line.

He'll also examine photos that changed history by accident: one of Abe Lincoln's tousled hair that helped him gain the presidency; another of candidate Gary Hart on a yacht that lost it for him.

You can catch the prof's intriguing "Gotcha" show and tell at the Columbia High School library, 7:30-9 p.m. for \$18 (student rate, \$5). Tickets available at the door, or click on [somadulthoodschool.org](http://somadulthoodschool.org).

Meanwhile, we "Innocents Abroad" will still be waiting for our "Gotcha" photo, coming any day now from Italy with love.

***-- Columnist Rose Bennett Gilbert is a syndicated journalist (CREATORS.com) and a passionate trustee of the South Orange-Maplewood Adult School.***

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