

# THE ROMAN DREAM COME TRUE



by  
John M. Haffert

**T**wo young ladies attending one of England's finest finishing schools had a dream. As they both proceeded to university studies for degrees in Education, the dream grew. When one of the two returned to her home in Rome to be married and the other followed to teach English literature in a Roman school, they began to think of the dream as something that could actually come to life.

## Looked for Villa

They dreamed of making Rome itself a "classroom", with one of the great Roman villas a "finishing" atmosphere for young ladies.

Their clipped British accent was soon familiar to every villa owner in and near Rome. Luigina Brugnoli, the Roman citizen of the team, worked in one direction; the English partner, Carole Hutchison, worked in another. When a good prospect was found, they converged. It was a long search, but finally an ideal villa was found. It was

to cost over \$1,000 a month, but nothing was too good for so noble a dream; and Saint Francis was their friend. So was Saint Anthony.

## School Opens

Little thought was given to the possibility of students from the United States. This was a dream born in England, and at first it included only English students. But a few Americans heard about it, and quickly applied for entrance.

Among these Americans was the daughter of the present writer, who thus learned personally of the school's methods and purpose. The effect of the school on his own daughter was such that he began to speak to Mrs. Brugnoli and Miss Hutchison, founders of the school, to extend a general invitation to Americans and to intensify the 'Roman Classroom' idea on which the school was founded.

The first Americans who responded did not know of the English

term periods which are substantially different from those of the United States. Also, some of the girls had the idea that such a school in Rome was to be a pleasant tour, with little discipline and less study. But the capable school faculty soon had matters "sorted out" so that the English dream in Rome became an American reality.

## Preparation for Marriage

Most young ladies aspire to marriage as their major career, but they attend colleges and universities as though marriage was to be secondary and some OTHER career was to be major. As a result, many a housewife today would make an excellent school teacher, but is mediocre in the kitchen; many would make excellent nurses, but are weak in the social amenities; many could help their husbands with accounting and law, but their English diction is ordinary. Some can hold an excellent conversation about philosophy or psychology, but they have only a vague knowledge



The Dining Room

of world affairs, have never traveled with intelligent guidance, have no broader a circle of friends than in their own neighborhood.

A finishing school is intended to prepare young ladies to be gentle women, with some genuine understanding of the fine arts, a sense of the wide world around them, a sense of history; and above all those refinements of character which their parents try to instill in them in their early years, but which often remain as diamonds in the rough.

Perhaps that is the best way to describe what happens in a school like Romana: The rough diamonds are polished by the very culture of Rome itself, by association with students from other parts of the world, but above all by the skilled and trained ability of highly specialized teachers who themselves not only came from distinguished families, but are the product of the finest English training.

### The Roman Classroom

There are many other finishing schools in the world. Some of them are justly famous. But ROMANA is unique. Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to give an idea of the tremendous effect the Brugnoli-Hutchison dream has on teenagers.

It is the effect of Roman magic skillfully applied.

The American poet Longfellow wrote of Rome:

"Tis the Centre to which all gravitates. One finds no rest elsewhere than here. There maybe other cities that please us for awhile, but Rome alone completely satisfies."

Many think of Rome primarily as the center of the Catholic Church so how could Protestant Longfellow call Rome "the centre to which all gravitates"? Also Keats and Shelley, two of the greatest luminaries of English letters, lived in the heart of Rome and are now buried near the tomb of Caius Cestius, a towering pyramid which witnessed the martyrdom of Saint Paul, yet appears as though built yesterday.

That's part of the wonder and mystery of Rome and consequently of ROMANA.

At every turn we see witnesses of all that was important in shaping our present world. The treasures of the past four thousand years have been funnelled from every continent, through millenia of history, into this concentrated area.

There are more authentic and original Greek works of art in

Rome, even from the time of the Golden Age of Pericles, than there are in all of Greece.

There are more Egyptian monoliths and obelisks in Rome than there are in all of Egypt.

There are more books, more works of art, more centers of music, more of just about everything ... all in one place.

In addition to all that has been brought from all over the world there is ROME ITSELF... where democracy was first developed as a world ideal; where the whole history of our world was moulded; where Christianity had a universal birth in the blood of thousands of martyrs; where Peter and Paul preached and founded the Church and died.

Only when one has lived in Rome for years can he begin to appreciate all that remains to be seen, to be discovered, about the history of old Rome; about the more than 200 Popes who with few exceptions lived continually in Rome since the time of Saint Peter; about the saints who worked here and are buried here, like Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri, Catherine of Sienna; about all the Saints of modern times who found God so intimately in this city of the apostles; the Little Flower, Benedict Joseph Labre, Anne Marie Taigi, and a list that would fill more than a page.

### History Everywhere

What about the catacombs; the new discoveries under Saint Peter's; the masterpieces of art and architecture like St. Peter's itself, the scattered works of Michelangelo, Canova, Bernini, cropping up everywhere throughout the city? And what about the antiquities we come upon at every turn like the pyramid mentioned at the beginning, the Colosseum, the forums, the amazing triumphal arches and columns of Aurelius (Piazza Colonna) and Trajan dominating the area of what used to be the center of Rome at the time of Christ?

Never, were we to continue in this vein for several pages, could we begin to create an adequate impression of the religious and cult-

Catholic Traveler

ural wealth of Rome which cries out even to the most impassive passerby inexhaustibly.

No one could visit Rome and not be more history-conscious and culture-conscious.

So what will we say of the person, especially in those critical "finishing years" between 15 and 19, who could spend a year in carefully guided study here?

This is the finally fulfilled dream of ROMANA.

### Example

Those of us who do not appreciate fine art and good music probably have just not learned how.

In Rome we see art. We see its development in perspective through the Middle Ages, and we see the greatest genius up to modern times. We learn not just from books, but from art itself. Even a few minutes in front of a masterpiece like the Moses of Michelangelo can do more to arouse in us an appreciation of man's effort to express human dignity and feeling on canvas or in stone than many lectures on the subject.

This is why so many come to Rome. This is part of what Longfellow meant.

But far more important than the development and appreciation of art is Christianity: a truth which conquered Rome, and today more than art or music, shapes the nations of the world.

Here ROMANA acquires its prime importance because "finishing" implies far more than a refinement of one's artistic tastes. It implies a rounding of the sharp edges of selfishness and a vision of the great moral principles which alone can illuminate human character.

How does it feel to stand on the spot where teenage Agnes was stripped by the soldiers, miraculously protected from their grossness, and received the crown of martyrdom? How does it feel to look upon the spot where Cecilia



Moses by Michelangelo.

spread her three fingers as ultimate profession of faith?

Even if we visited one such holy spot every day of the year, we could not see them all. There are over 365 such places in Rome!

### What the Girls Like Most

A "Grand Tour of Europe" is conducted by the faculty in conjunction with the opening and closing of Romana School. It covers eleven countries. (England, France, Andorra, Spain, Monaco, Italy, San Marino, Austria, Germany, Holland, Belgium).

Including ground transportation, meals, arrangements, constant fac-

ulty guidance, hotels, tips, sight-seeing, entrance fees, the total cost for the trip from Rome to Assisi, Rimini, San Marino, Padua, Venice, Innsbruck, Munich, steamer trip up the Rhine, Wiesbaden, Cologne, Holland and Belgium, complete, is only \$96! It's part of the wonderful "Romana package".

Another of Romana's most popular features with the girls is the social program, planned to bring them into contact with young men of similar background.

Every girl soon learns all the latest dances and variations on the old ones! Dances are arranged in cooperation with two of the major boys' schools of Rome. Altogether



*Romana girls getting mail from home.*

there are 14,000 Americans living in Rome at the present time.

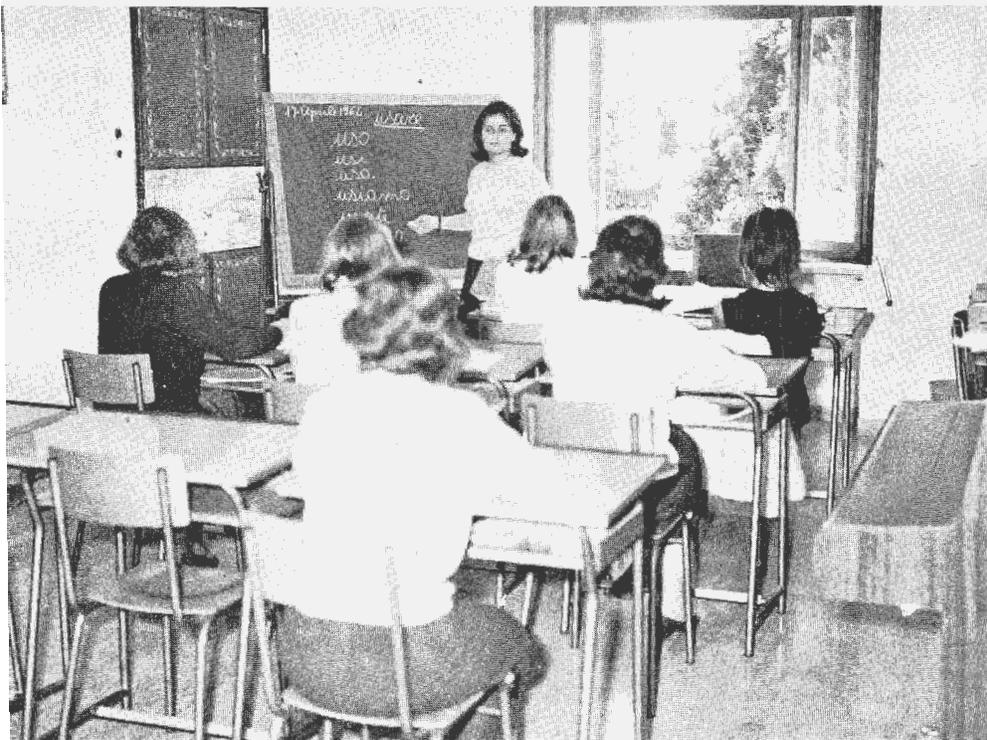
Exciting to most girls are the three major sports of Romana. swimming, horseback riding and skiing on the beautiful slopes of Terminillo.

What is not generally known to many Americans is that Italy has produced the finest equestrian school in the world. The "forward

seat", now used in England and by fine riders all over the world was actually developed in Rome. ROMANA expects next year to have its own horses and riding master, thus reducing the usual cost of lessons from \$10 (the current fee) to \$2.00!

### **Two Divisions**

The school is actually divided into two divisions: the Finishing School, with a maximum registra-  
*Italian class at Romana.*



tion of 20; and the Roman Classroom alone, with a maximum registration of 25. No more than these numbers will be accepted in any given year, which runs from late September to mid-May. Up to 30 are accepted for the ten-week, intensified summer session of the Roman Classroom.

### **Entrance Qualifications**

The main limitations are age and character. A careful screening process has been set up, in addition to which more than two violations of any of the school's 3 major rules invites immediate dismissal. Parents, who must supply the return ticket home at the time their daughter enters Romana, must think twice about sending a girl who does not know the rudiments of good behavior. Most girls will vie for the awards to be made at the annual Romana ball, a prime requisite for which is Romana's standards of deportment. Of the ten awards, the most coveted is the Anne Marie Taigi gold medal.

### **Vacations**

Since the school year at Romana is from mid-September to mid-May, it might be a little far for some parents to come for a Feast like Christmas. But if they do, they are welcomed right into the Romana heart and home, with their own daughter as their hostess. Some girls go home for vacations.

For vacations Romana has six side trips a year: to Florence; Assisi and Loreto; Naples and Pompeii; Nettuno (Saint Mary Goretti) and the Mediterranean Coast. These are all overnight trips. The one to Florence is at Easter time, lasts five days, and is in exchange with a Florentine Finishing School. There is talk that next year there may be an exchange also with a finishing school in Paris.

Prices for these side trips, combining vacation with travel, are nominal to cover transportation and hotels.

### **The Romana Prices**

The full year is \$650 for day students and \$965 for those who are boarded in a convent outside the Villa. The latter reside with

the Sisters of the Holy Family on the Aventine, one of the seven hills of Rome, overlooking the Circus Maximus, and one of the most elite sections of old Rome.

The complete Finishing school, boarding in Romana Villa, is \$1360 from September to May. In conjunction with the school, operated by the Romana faculty, is the Grand Tour of Europe. Spring tour for \$162 includes extensive tour of England, France, Spain and Italy. Fall tour for \$96 includes eastern Italy (Assisi, Rimini, San Marino, Padua, Venice), Austria, Germany (with famous Rhine steamer trip), Holland and Belgium.

The Roman Classroom Summer Course, including north and south portions of Grand Tour is \$858 complete and fills the months of July and August. This course compresses the year of "Roman Classroom" into two and a half months!

### The Cost

As mentioned above, there are actually two divisions to ROMANA: The Roman Classroom alone, with its almost daily field trips; and the Finishing School.

Those who attend the Finishing School participate in the full Roman Classroom program, but in addition to this they live in the Villa Romana with the faculty. The Villa is their "home". As their training develops they take turns being hostess. They are taught how to manage a kitchen on their own, as well as how to manage with servants. They themselves participate in the planning and management of the annual Romana Ball. In some of the fine concerts given at Romana by distinguished Roman artists, the young ladies themselves take turns introducing the artists. All are trained in the reception and treatment of guests. But of greatest importance remains the constant application of the "lessons" of the Roman Classroom.

While all this is taking place, the young ladies are acquiring a working knowledge of classical Italian, the language of the operas and a key to the Latin languages of the world.

The Patron Saint of ROMANA is the incredible Anne Marie Taigi, who lived in a palace on the Piazza Colonna. While she was not mistress of the palace, but wife of the Prince's butler, she received more distinguished visitors than the Prince himself. She was consulted by the Pope, yet she knew how to graciously keep a Cardinal waiting if her husband needed her slightest attention. Mother of seven, she rose to the heights of sanctity. Yet her visions and ecstasies never interfered with her being a perfect wife and mother. She was as much at home with the poorest of the poor as she was with the mother of Napoleon.

### Dream Fulfilled

Rome is full of the memories of Blessed Anne Marie. One could spend an entire year studying Rome just in her footsteps. In one of the city's oldest basilicas on the Via Trastevere, is the Chapel with her body, while adjacent to the church is a room filled with actual furnishings and personal effects which recall hundreds of details of her life as wife and mother.

In her teens, Anne Marie loved to walk on the Corso in a fine dress and wearing her favorite necklace of simulated pearls. She was happily sensitive to lingering, admiring glances of all the young men. It was little wonder she married at an early age, and little wonder that her handsome husband enjoyed just as much those sunny walks on the Corso.

This perfectly normal girl, who developed so much in her relationship to fellow men and to God that during her own lifetime she performed dozens of miracles and will undoubtedly one day soon be proclaimed the model of all married women, is as yet comparatively unknown outside of Rome, except for her many prophecies, some of which already have been fulfilled.

The dream of ROMANA is fulfilled every day that one of its young ladies, learning to grace each moment of this worldly life with feminine virtues, becomes just a little more like the incredible Anne Marie, Who raised her seven children in the "Roman Classroom".



Miss O'Connor (center) teaches Domestic Science.

Each year a solid gold medal with the image of Blessed Anne Marie is given to the most outstanding student.

### Inspired by Mrs. Kennedy

The second most prized recognition of a Romana graduate is the Santa Casa award. This originally was to be called the Jacqueline Kennedy award because the ten categories of the award were inspired by the qualities shown by Mrs. Kennedy as First Lady in the White House. These are the ideals of wife and mother: Deportment, Languages, Social Graces, World Affairs, Religion, Domestic Management, Artistic Appreciation and Decor, Music, Physical Fitness, and Horsemanship.

The name of the award was changed to Santa Casa after the Holy House of Nazareth where Our Lady kept house for over thirty years, because of a special favor received by Romana after a school pilgrimage to the Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy.

The awards are presented annually, having first been blessed in the original Holy House of Nazareth, where a special Mass is celebrated for all students and graduates of Romana on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.