

Turning lemons into limoncello in Italy

I just returned from a fabulous vacation in Italy, but it didn't start out that way.

We should have known things would go downhill fast when we smelled burning wires shortly after leaving the car rental garage at Rome's Fiumicino airport. At first we thought it was the car in front, then just the random bad smells of a large metropolis. But when it started pouring and we had no windshield wipers, we knew it was us. Of course, by then we were an hour away from Rome and heading to our rented villa in Umbria.

There was a traffic jam and the car stalled, as manual transmissions are known to do. But there in the middle of a busy street on a rainy day the car would not restart. We couldn't turn the key. We couldn't shut the car off and start over again. We couldn't take the key out of the ignition. Tired and cranky from some 16 hours of travel at that point, we started bickering.

I sat behind the wheel while my husband and a stranger, pushed the car to the side of the road and into a parking spot.

We called the number for the rental agency's roadside assistance. The man who answered spoke some English and said that a tow truck would be there shortly and that he would arrange for a replacement vehicle. The tow truck showed up in about 45 minutes. We put our luggage on the sidewalk while the man loaded the car on a flatbed. He asked to have some paperwork signed and was heading back to the cab of the truck when I asked him if he knew anything about our replacement car. "Non lo so," the man shrugged. He said he just drove the truck.

Still raining. Still on the sidewalk, I was thinking about Jack Lemmon and Sandy Dennis in "The Out-of-Towners," and was not optimistic about how the day would turn out.

I called the rental company again and gave the woman our service



Flotsam and Jetsam

By Donna Drago

call number. She barely spoke English, but we managed to figure out that they could not deliver a car to us. We would have to get to Perugia, nearly two hours away, to pick up a car there. She gave us a phone number. They were closed until Monday morning. Looking pathetic, we dragged our luggage across the street to a bar, sat down and had a glass of wine. I asked the woman at the counter if she knew of other car rental agencies and she got out a phone book to look for us. Meanwhile, she brought us peanuts and cheese doodles served in footed glass bowls. We took down a couple of numbers and called while snacking on the doodles, which, given the circumstances, were surprisingly delicious. Both places were closed until Monday. I asked about a taxi. The woman pointed in the direction of the center of town, but warned that "he's not usually there."

We walked to the taxi stand and sat for awhile. No taxi. I walked across the street to the bakery where a woman was closing up shop for the afternoon "riposo." She unlocked the store and went in the back room to find the phone number of Mauro, the driver.

I called but got an agitated old woman who told me not to bother Mauro now—he's eating lunch.

We decided that having lunch sounded like a great idea and found a nearby restaurant where we enjoyed assorted local cold cuts and cheeses and wonderful pasta sprinkled with truffles. We felt better.

After lunch we started our quest for a way to get out of Amelia and

off to Spoleto, where the caretakers of the villa were waiting for us.

I spotted a young policeman. I explained our predicament and asked him how we could get to Spoleto—about an hour away. He walked us to the information office, where he inquired about the possible routes for us. Either we could take a bus to the town of Narni, then a train to Spoleto, which would take a total of about four hours, or we could take a taxi, but, he warned, "It will be very expensive." "We'll take the taxi," we chimed in unison.

So the police officer walked us back to his office—nothing more than a double-wide phone booth with a tiny desk and he dialed Mauro, who clearly was the only game in town, and who presumably had finished his lunch. Mauro showed up at the police booth in 10 minutes and we were off to Spoleto. Meanwhile we had called the house caretakers—a woman and her high school aged son—who agreed to meet us at the train station and drive us up to the house.

They not only took us to the house, they took us to the supermarket and waited outside for us while we picked up some basic necessities.

We got to our mountaintop house about four hours later than we had planned. Still no car but we were safe and sheltered.

Breaking down in a strange town was a bit frightening at first. But looking back, I am remembering not the bickering or the rain or being stranded by the rental car company, but the people who helped. There was the guy who pushed the car. The barmaid with her phone book and cheese doodles. The woman at the bakery who opened her shop. The cop in Amelia who stopped everything he was doing for us. The caretakers who truly took care of us.

A very bad day had a good ending because of strangers' willingness to help.

South County Welcomes Home Dr. Aaron Weisbord, Cardiologist

A real native of South County, Aaron Weisbord, M.D., was born at South County Hospital, grew up in South Kingstown and graduated from South Kingstown High School. After leaving the state to pursue educational and professional goals, he is now returning to serve his home town as a physician, joining South County Cardiology Associates on Kenyon Avenue in Wakefield.



Dr. Aaron Weisbord, Cardiologist

One of Dr. Weisbord's strengths as a cardiologist is in developing relationships with patients and educating them about their medical issues. "I'd like to make coming to a cardiologist easier and less anxiety-producing for patients. I want to be able to reassure them but also make sure they fully understand the nature of their problem."

Upon graduation from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in American history, Dr. Weisbord spent three years in Washington D.C. as a legislative aide to Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed, helping to draft legislation on Veterans Affairs and acting as a liaison for Rhode Island students who needed assistance with government agencies. He was motivated to study medicine after his father, a History professor at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, developed cardiac disease. "It was an honor to work with Senator Reed helping Rhode Islanders with their problems on a daily basis. I realized I could continue to do that as a physician."

After taking post-baccalaureate science classes at URI,

be serving the community where I grew up, caring for and developing relationships with patients and their families," he said. "My ability to achieve my goal of becoming a cardiologist had a lot to do with the top-quality experiences and education I got growing up in South County, and I am eager to give back to the community I've gotten so much from."

Dr. Weisbord lives with his wife and two young children in East Greenwich. His parents still reside in South Kingstown. He enjoys running and watching the Red Sox, but most of all, he enjoys spending time with his family.

Dr. Weisbord joined South County Cardiology Associates in July. He is accepting new patients and can be reached in Wickford at (401) 294-5831.

Weisbord headed west to attend the UCLA School of Medicine, where he graduated with honors. Returning to New England Dr. Weisbord completed his internship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center-Harvard Medical School. "While I enjoyed California, I missed the sense of community that you have as a New Englander."

He continued to make his way closer to home when he accepted a fellowship at the Brown University School of Medicine where he excelled as an award-winning teacher. Dr. Weisbord has recently begun seeing patients at his South County-based practice. "I am really pleased to

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