



OUR PURCHASE AND RESTORATION OF THE VILLA CORNARO

**- A NOW WORLD FAMOUS ITALIAN NATIONAL MONUMENT
WHICH WAS BUILT IN 1553-4 BY ANDREA PALLADIO -
AND IS PERHAPS THE MOST COPIED PIECE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE WESTERN WORLD.**
by Richard H. Rush with Julia Rush

WE STARTED COLLECTING OLD MASTER PAINTINGS IN 1955. By 1959, we decided to make the rounds of museums and dealers in Europe to sharpen our eye and to try to find (and purchase) some fine old master paintings. We did this with a list of special recommendations from the late Dr. William E. Suida, Curator of the Kress Collection.

We then visited Europe almost every year buying at least a few paintings on each trip - particularly the trips during the 1960s and 1970s when prices were still reasonable and discoveries possible..

By 1968, we felt we knew Europe pretty well, and we thought that maybe we should own a home there. This would give us an anchor in Europe and it would be a second home which we could occupy for two or three months of each year - particularly in the summertime.

We looked in England and we looked in France, with particular emphasis on various chateaux near Paris, but we soon found that the chateaux near Paris were out of the question - as they were either too expensive or not near Paris.

In 1959-1961, when we first looked in England, prices were very low for beautiful manor houses, and, in fact, we were looking when J. Paul Getty purchased "Sutton Place" Guildford, Surrey for a few hundred thousand dollars.

We had been collecting Italian art and antiques

As we had become particularly interested in Italian paintings and Italian antique furniture, we thought of Italy as a possibility. We had heard from Dr. Suida's son-in-law, Robert Manning, that there was a possibility of buying villas from the Italian government. On our visit to Italy in July 1968, we were entertained on our arrival in Venice at a dinner party, in a private dining room at the Gritti Palace, by the Countess Kathleen Balbi-Valier. We had met Kathleen and her husband, Count Balbi, in the early 1960s through mutual friends. We had published the Claude Monet painting of the Balbi-Valier palace on the Grand Canal, Venice ("*Palazzo da Mula*"), in my 1961 book, "*Art as an Investment*." This had pleased the Count, a member of one of the oldest and most aristocratic families of Venice.

At the small elegant dinner, we met the Director of the Museum of Modern Art of Venice, and the Director of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, as well as Peggy Guggenheim, Queen Aspesia of Greece, Princess Eristavi, and Mr. Tissot, designer of Tiffany glass creations, and several other collectors. I was seated next to Peggy Guggenheim, the advocate and proponent of Modern Art, whose museum in Venice is a landmark palace on the Grand Canal.

During the course of the conversation at dinner, I remarked to Peggy that we had failed to locate any suitable house to purchase in England or in France. Peggy suggested that we get in touch with *L'Ente Per Le Ville Venete*.

She said, "There is a government organization here in Venice whose job it is to buy up rundown or endangered architectural treasures and restore them with funds supplied by the government in Rome..." She went on to say that this project had worked well for a time, but that now they might sell a property or two, as very few funds were forthcoming from Rome. "The organization here in Venice is called the Council of the Villas of the Veneto [*L'Ente per le Ville Venete*] and its head is the Marchese Giuseppe Roi. Why don't you pay him a visit?" she said.

Thursday, July 4th, 1968, we took the advice of Peggy Guggenheim and we visited the offices in the Piazza San Marco of "*L'Ente per le Ville Venete*". We spoke to the Marchese Roi.

It was suggested that we hire a taxi and visit some of the villas which were owned by *L'Ente per le Ville Venete* and were under their jurisdiction to restore. Marietta Guetta, Director of the US Pavilion of the Biennale, whom we had just met at the dinner party, went with us and acted as a translator. We looked at the list of palazzos and villas "in restoration" - which might be available for purchase.

Friday, July 5th, we hired a car to see the palazzos and villas "in restoration" - as arranged - and Marietta Guetta came with us again to act as an interpreter. She had asked to come, and we were pleased to have her along.

It was a wonderful day and we looked at several villas which were listed for us and we indicated each location on a map along with the asking price. In the center of the little town of Piombino Dese, just 18 miles northwest of Venice, we found what we felt was the villa - the extraordinary *Villa Cornaro*, built in the year 1553 by the great architect, Andrea Palladio.

A Villa by Andrea Palladio in need of someone to restore it and maintain it.

We might indicate what the villa actually looks like. The front features the projecting six columned two-story portico - the design so copied in America and throughout the world. There are 14 major rooms and four minor ones plus the cantina and the attic - but what rooms! On entering, the space opens up to one of the most beautiful four-columned classic rooms in the world.

Symmetry was the keynote of the architecture of Andrea Palladio. On each of the two main floors there is a center main hall - roughly 35 feet by 35 feet and the height of the main center rooms is about the same. On the main floor - the *piano nobile* - there are four very tall ionic columns which stand on the antique terra cotta tile floor and support the ceiling cross beams and the floor above.

Surrounding these there are six niches in the walls with the oversize portrait statues of the Cornaro family members. There are four interior doorways from the center hall which are magnificently framed.

The six (over eight foot high) niches hold the six over life-size stucco statues (portraits of famous family members such as the Queen of Cyprus, Caterina Cornaro, and a Doge Marco Cornaro, and the builder of the villa, Admiral Giorgio Cornaro), done by sculptor *Camillo Mariani* in the late sixteenth century (circa 1590). Some pieces of the plasterwork and small bits on the sculptures (such as a few fingers) were broken off but on the whole the statues were remarkably untouched.

Mattia Bortoloni a young Venetian, created the over 100 frescoes commissioned in 1717. These frescoes, some quite large, on walls and ceilings and over doors, depict the Old Testament on the first floor and the new testament in two rooms on the second floor. The frescoes with a few exceptions appeared in excellent condition. The plasterwork, done at the same time by *Bartolo Cabianca* is typical of the best of the early eighteenth century Venetian plasterwork - featuring frames on over-mantle frescoes and *putti* (winged cupids) holding the over-door frescoes with stucco drapery. The walls surrounding the frescoes show fine plasterwork - including scrolled leaf and floral designs, a Cornaro family crest, a doge's cap, and a few stucco portrait heads.

To my wife, Julie, and myself, the villa was overwhelming. And we could not believe that a Palladian villa - a magnificent and historic villa built by Andrea Palladio himself - could be available to purchase.

It was about 150 feet long and perhaps 18,000 square feet - or thereabout, with attic and cantina, - but most of the windows were cracked or were missing pieces.. There were leaded glass windows throughout the villa with the exception of the west wall where a bomb had blown out the glass and the replacement had been with plain glass within the wooden frames. All windows were shuttered (the shutters swung outward) and the leaded glass windows opened from the center and swung inward.

The iron gates were rusted and partially broken. There were large and small paper advertisement posters plastered on the antique brick garden wall facing the street.

Throughout the house there was visible wiring for rudimentary electricity. In some cases, only a bulb hung from the ceiling. There was one large antique metal and glass chandelier in the center hall, but there was no furniture other than an old (not antique) table in the center hall - and everywhere there was dust and dirt.

A little bat (*good fortune* to the Chinese) flew onto my necktie while several other bats perched on a high window sill in the great center hall. The high unshuttered portico

window was broken and they could easily fly in and out. The bathrooms were out of date and tiles and fixtures needed replacing. There was an old stove for cooking in the kitchen and a little sink in the pantry. There was a large stove for heating in the living room.

There was no visible heating other than that. But there were magnificent original marble framed fireplaces in all of the major rooms. And in the living room the fireplace was lined with antique tiles. Mirrors in plaster frames are over the fireplaces. The chimney walls downstairs are decorated with elaborately stucco-framed, symbolic figure frescoes.

The villa had been purchased by the local Catholic Church and was used as a school for little children before the Council (*L'Ente per le Ville Venete*) purchased it to save it from further damage by the use for a school.. For example, one wall had been cut through at a spot where there had been a window on the stairwell and an ugly plain metal door was placed there to allow the children to go out and use toilets in a row of outhouses, which had been made for their use in the garden next to the villa.

And although many things had been done without regard for the importance of the villa, it had withstood the treatment well and was intact - with rare original terra cotta tile floors on the first floor in the center hall and west wing and there were the beautiful frescoes and marvelous plasterwork including the magnificent six sculptures in niches.

As for the outside of the house, it had not been recently cleaned or restored and although the southern side of the villa (away from view from the street) which did not get the northern winds and strong rains was in remarkable and almost untouched original condition, (the proof of which was seventeenth century *graffiti* on the walls of the south portico dating some major family events.)

There were some exceptions such as cracks and a piece of plaster which had broken off over the south portico. However, the front, (the north side) was darkened by black mold which is common on the north side of buildings. It was also worn by north winds and rain, and a piece of the marble ionic column top was broken off as well as some of the plaster detail. There was also some damage from vines (vines damage the surface if not removed.) Old restorations had changed color and darkened more than surrounding areas.

What was our reaction to this house

The next day, July 6th, we returned alone to Piombino Dese and revisited the villa.. We had lunch at the *caffè* in the *Albergo Palladio* across the street from the villa, sitting outside after lunch for several hours - just looking and thinking.

At that point we knew that we would try to purchase the villa and restore it to its original beauty if we could - and we already had the Italian antiques which we had been collecting and these would be most suitable in the villa. We also thought that some of our Italian paintings would find a home there.

We made a bid on the house

We got in touch with the office of *L'Ente Per Le Ville Venete* and discussed the possibility of buying the villa and expressed our desire to do so. We made an offer somewhat below the asking price, and, as the Marchese Giussepi Roi was in Rome, we headed to Rome and the Marchese Roi visited us at our hotel there.

He told us that there was another prospective buyer, an Italian, who had offered exactly the same price as we had - and that the Council had turned down both bids. We wanted the villa and tried to think how we could buy it when there was also the interested Italian.

We had some time to think about this while we were in Rome for a few days. The next day we made an appointment to see Paul Getty's villa which was not far from Rome. We had promised Paul that we would take a look at it and see how things were progressing on the restoration. He hadn't visited Italy in two years and was anxious for first hand reports.

Mario, Paul Getty's chauffeur, arrived at our hotel to pick us up and take us to the villa on the coast in Paolo. The day was hot - 104 at least - in mid July, but when we arrived at the villa, no fewer than eighty workmen were busy at work on a complete rebuilding of the interior - with great care to preserve an "antique" appearance. Paul supervised carefully all of the details from England. He had a very good and expert foreman.

We estimated that this complete rebuilding of the interior and restoration costs might be in the millions. Fortunately, we would not have to do this much to the Palladian villa at Piombino Dese, as structurally everything was intact.

Wednesday the 17th of July, we went to Vicenza by train and visited the museum there and walked through the town to study in detail the many important buildings by Palladio. From Vicenza, we returned to Piombino Dese in the afternoon to look at the Villa Cornaro again. We went to Venice on the 18th to visit the *L'Ente per Le Ville Venete* and to discuss the purchase of the villa again and to raise our bid.

We raised our bid

We offered more than we had previously bid - and more than had been asked by the *Ente* originally. We thought we would then be approved for buying the villa. Not so! We had to be approved by the entire Council of the Villas of the Veneto, the *Consiglio Superiore*, the Minister of Culture of Rome and the Superintendent of Monuments in Venice.

Approval with letters of sponsorship

To secure approvals of the purchase we had to submit a detailed report on what we proposed to do to the villa (although they did not specifically require that we do anything) and we had to have three sponsors. We secured letters from three very good sponsors: These were J. Paul Getty, who was himself restoring his villa in Italy at the time, and the then Secretary of Commerce in the United States, C. R. Smith, and our Florentine friend, Count Giorgio Geddes da Filicaia. In fact, the Count Geddes kindly made a translation into Italian of our request to purchase the villa together with our background and plans for restoring and maintaining the villa.

It was perhaps the Count who had long been a good friend with a common interest in Italian sports cars, and Ferraris in particular, who gave us a special desire to live in Italy. In the 1960s, we had visited his family palace "Cerreto" of 250 rooms and his apartment in another family palace in the Piazza d'Azeglio, Florence.

July 31st, 1968, we returned to London and visited with Paul Getty at Sutton Place the following Sunday. We told him all about the restoration of his villa at Paolo.

. We told him about the Palladian Villa we wanted to buy and he joked a bit (were we foolish that we were both buying and restoring villas in Italy?) but he agreed to write a letter for us to the Council...

It took a year before it was ours

We had to wait a year to get the permission to actually buy the villa. It became ours on July 3, 1969. I went to Mestre (just outside of Venice) for the signing of the papers for the purchase of the Villa Cornaro. The bank draft had arrived from America (U.S. American Security & Trust, Washington, D.C.) for *L'Ente per le Ville Venete*. The Council also gave us a mortgage for part of the payment at a very low 3% rate.

And a few selected notes from Julie's 1969 Travel Diary:

July 3rd "IT WAS SIGNED - AND SO THE PALLADIO AT PIOMBINO DESE IS OURS"

"We then went for a celebration of "Cocktails at Marietta Guetta's and dinner with our good friend, Kathleen, the Countess Balbi."

July 4th, Venice, Friday. "Although it is the fourth of July in America, here in Italy it is another work day. Visited the office of the head of the monuments of the Venete (*Soprintendente . dei Monumenti del Veneto*) Mr. Padoan- and then Richard visited the office of *L'Ente Per Le Ville Venete* from which the villa has been purchased, to discuss arrangements for the restoration of the Palladio at Piombino Dese. (Scheduled a meeting for Friday next with the head officials.)"

"We took a plane from Venice to FLORENCE at 4:45 P.M. and checked in at the Lungarno Hotel.

July 7th, Florence. "Monday, all morning and afternoon we visited dealers and bought fine antique furniture for the Villa Cornaro.

"We bought four Louis XVI classic side chairs, a beautiful, large, green painted, carved and decorated Venetian center table, a very large palace size *poltrona* (armchair) silvered, and upholstered in cut velvet, a large armadio (closet - cupboard) painted and decorated, and a Louis XVI side table, carved and gilded. All of these pieces are Italian antiques of the 18th century and will be beautiful for the villa. They were purchased from the President of the Antique Dealers Association of Florence."

July 11th, Piombino Dese. "We went to Piombino Dese where Mr. Padoan, head of all monuments in the Veneto, was to meet us at the villa at 3:30.

We arrived at noon and were there to go over the details with him concerning restoration and what we were allowed to do and what we were not allowed to do. The rules are very strict concerning the restoration of national monuments and certain things cannot be done and not much of anything can be done without permission (usually in writing)."

Supervision of the restoration project by the Superintendent

We could visualize the end result and took to the project with enthusiasm, refusing to be discouraged when red tape and permission problems seemed to slow us down, on some occasions, to a standstill. It was done (the restoration) under the supervision - with special written permissions usually required - of the Superintendent of Monuments.

The workmen were for the most part our local *muratori* (bricklayers) and gardeners, metal workers, and, in the case of the glass replacement - neighboring experts from a town nearby - Bassano

What belonged to the villa and what had been sold to others

The local church had purchased the villa furnished and also purchased with the villa the adjacent two hundred foot building (*barchese*) designed by Scamozzi in the 1590s and some surrounding land.. In order to immediately raise the funds to pay for the purchase of the Villa Cornaro and its surrounding property, the adjacent building was

divided and sold by the church to various local people for offices and stores as was all of the villa furniture and the entire heating system. Thus in the *barchese* of the villa we had a grocery store (*alimentari*), a jewelry shop, a hairdresser, a fruit and vegetable shop, a hardware store, and a bank.

The land (a number of acres of farmland) beyond the park south of the villa (and on the other side of the stream and south of the original brick seven-arched Palladian bridge) was sold by the church to, among others, the family of Ilario Mariotto.. Fortunately, the bridge and stream were retained for the villa as were the back gate and gate posts.

After the villa was purchased from the local church by the *Ente per Le Ville Venete*, the church and village priest built a new school for little children and a building for offices.

The few acres of land immediately south of the villa's *barchese* and to the south-west of the villa were sold to the town which created a public playing field, and soccer games were held regularly. Occasionally a ball would come over the fence and we would throw it back.

Access for a car or truck or tractor from the street was through an arch in the center of the villa's *barchese* and this was retained for the villa as an entrance from the main street (Via Roma, a Roman highway when the villa was built and still existing today.)

Cleaning the villa

First we had to clean the house. There were piles of dust and dirt in every room from *cantina* to attic.. The villa had been empty for a number of years. It took a week to clean (and this was done by the Marulli family while we were away at a cost of the equivalent \$450 at \$1.00 per hour.) Mr. Marulli was the custodian, (paid \$35 a month by *L'Ente*) but it had not been his job to keep the house clean, but only to see that no damage was inflicted and that the grass was mowed. He had it cut at no charge by a hand scythe wielded by a local farmer - when the grass was long enough to be worthwhile to the farmer to cut and haul away with his cart and donkey -(to use as feed for his livestock.)

Repairing the broken glass in the windows

One of the first of the major things to be done were the windows. We counted 163 windows in the villa - on the ground floor, the first floor and the second floor, the stairways, mezzanines, and attic and some of these were really magnificent windows, many with over 100 small leaded glass panes.

What we did was cart these windows, one or two at a time, to the special glazier in the town of Bassano, some twelve miles to the north of the villa. It required two years to replace the missing panes and repair the leaded parts which were broken, and the cost was several thousand dollars - although we did have to pay this amount twice, as we paid the estimated price in advance and then had to pay it again when things were recalculated at the end. Mr. Marulli painted, varnished and oiled the wooden frames.

Electrical work on the villa

The electric restoration was a major work. What the villa had in the way of electrical circuitry was almost nonexistent. The Beggiora firm, father and two sons, was retained

essentially to rewire the entire villa. They started on the 13th of August, 1969. But here we met with severe limitations on how the new system could be installed.

The walls which were original, should not be touched, but we got permission (and a recommendation) from Superintendent Padoan to install the wires in the walls as the appearance of the wires on top of the plastered walls was distracting - and unlike it would have been at the time the villa was built.

The preparation for the electrical work was done while we were away for a while in London. I got on a plane one day and flew to Venice and went to the Villa to see how the electrical work was progressing.

The wires were to be placed in tubes and the tubes sunk in the walls. Why were the wires inserted in tubes? If there was a break, the electrician could simply open a tube and pull out a defective wire and install a new one. Also additional wires could be added for an internal telephone system, or whatever, as needed.

Now Mr. Beggiora had given me a labor charge of \$1.00 an hour. When my bill for the electrical work arrived, I saw that he had charged me \$1.25 an hour. When I asked him why the \$1.25 an hour rate, he replied, "It was more work than I had anticipated." So everything was made clear to me!

Along with the three electricians, there were three plaster and stonemasons - the Ilario Mariotto family. This group of six worked for over six months installing not only electric lines for lighting but also heavy-duty electric lines for electric heating plus lines for an internal telephone system. The telephone system had call stations in all major rooms throughout the villa so that to summon anyone, all you needed to do was to push one of the buttons. In the kitchen (as in the great houses which had servants) there was the box which indicated where the call was coming from.

We contracted directly with the laborers (keeping always in mind the permissions granted by the Superintendent) and as a rule did not work through a general contractor. Had we worked through a general contractor, our cost of restoration would have been double the amount we had to pay, I feel certain.

As for chandeliers, we were able to buy antique chandeliers in Florence. We were fortunate to find an eighteenth century Venetian chandelier of colorless glass in Florence. We arranged for the chandelier to be delivered and installed in the great hall. Another antique Venetian (Murano) glass chandelier was purchased in Rome and when it arrived, it took two men eight hours to install it. We were able to buy several other very fine antique Venetian chandeliers with colored glass and flowers - and two antique metal lanterns for ceilings and two on posts for the entrance hall. We also bought new "antique style" ceramic chandeliers in Venice and in Bassano.

. As we bought antique chandeliers, we would put the new ceramic ones (or other new glass or crystal ones) in the attic - hanging these on a beam - and perhaps some are still there. There was one antique chandelier in the villa - in the great hall - and when we replaced it with the large antique Venetian glass chandelier, we put it in the upstairs hall and put the one in the upstairs hall on the front portico of the villa. We set up an automatic light - *on* at dusk and *off* at dawn - for this front portico light. We did the same for portico lighting on the back of the villa.

We also installed two large spotlights to shine from the garden wall onto the front. Incidentally, the electrician, Mr. Beggiora, put no fewer than 17 electrical outlets in the

main downstairs and hall. (This was done in the event we wished to use electric baseboard heaters - or any special electrical items.) He really did, although when I got his bill, I thought he might be exaggerating a bit, until I counted. And these are not ordinary outlets, They are special - “*magic*” outlets throughout the villa.. When plugging into an outlet, there is no way that you can touch any wire or any metal part. (This requires a special plug for the appliance cord as well.)

We were required to install the new “*magic*” outlets, which are much better than the type we have always had in our houses in America and which are a danger to children whose fingers seem to find their way into the outlets. The on/off switches installed throughout the villa were also of a more modern design which at the time had not been used in our American homes. They were a flat type and are now used in modern homes, including ours, today.

Restoration of the bathrooms

Before we even started to work on the restoration, I had in mind that we wanted to use marble everywhere that I could, and we particularly wanted the green marble and the red Veronese marble, especially for the bathrooms. But we had to clear everything with the Superintendent and he gave us a quick answer, “Nothing doing.” We were allowed to use tile only in the bathrooms (terra cotta for the floors and a white tile with discreet edge for the walls.) The tub and sink and toilet and bidet were also white and we found a classic fluted column-and-shell design, which fitted the classic style of the villa perfectly, and is still popular today.

Concerning marble, I asked a local marble dealer in our town about using marble. He replied quickly, “No, marble is ugly. [*Brutto*]. You should never use it in the interior of a house. It is for ladies’ and men’s public bathrooms.”

We had received permission to replace the plumbing in the bathrooms as well as the tile on the walls and the floors of the bathrooms- but we were not allowed to use marble.

The interior of the house may measure 20,000 feet (my estimate) but we modernized or installed only three major bathrooms - (actually four if one considers the simple bathroom we installed in the basement *cantina*).

We selected the bath fixtures for the three main baths from a major supply house in Padua and we selected the finest gold plated fixtures we could find. On completion of our selection, we asked the salesman whether we could pay in dollars. He agreed and then converted the lire into dollars. “You owe \$100,” he told us. Our computation was somewhat different; and, in any event, no one could expect to buy gold-plated fixtures for \$100. “One thousand dollars” we told him. He calculated again and repeated, “One hundred dollars.” An argument ensued and we asked him to again make the calculation. Otherwise we were going to walk out of the store. Finally, his calculation agreed with ours. We gave him \$1,000 and not \$100.

The baths had to be hooked up to water lines, and this hooking up was done by Ilario Mariotto and family. A hot water system was installed (circulating hot water throughout the villa) with an oil burner in the *cantina*. Ilario and Sylvano redug and rebuilt the entire drainage system under the south park.

The kitchen

They also connected the water lines elsewhere, including the kitchen, which kitchen had to be done over radically. Although we were given permission by the Superintendent to install wooden cabinets and other kitchen fixtures, we decided to just put a kitchen sink in the small room off the kitchen (a pantry) which had a water line in place, and to buy refrigerators (with a wood finish) and a stove (with matching wood finish) and put them against the wall as furniture.

We then added later an American (circa 1800) sideboard , which had been accidentally sent along with the Italian antiques we shipped from our collection in America to the villa.

For cabinets, (to store china and serving dishes, etc.) we purchased a very large French eighteenth century *armoire*, in Florence. The *armoire* was fitted with shelves and was put against the north wall of the kitchen. It looked elegant and was a lovely antique. There was a small cupboard already there on the east wall with a door (screened) and we left that as it was for use to place items needed - glasses, cups, and napkins.

We later added a dishwasher and a combination washing machine and drier to the pantry sink area. We had a large Renaissance-style dining table made for the center of the kitchen by a local furniture maker and we ordered many rush-seated chairs.

The floors

The tiles were mostly original on the main floor (*piano nobile*) of the villa. The villa was over 400 years old at the time we purchased it (1553 - 1969) and one might expect the floors to be well worn, at least in part replaced, as the years passed. This was the case in the kitchen and the room at the opposite end of the villa and on the eastern side of the villa downstairs, on the ground floor (*Piano Nobile*). The terra cotta tiles were replaced in the two end rooms and in the living room to the east and adjacent rooms to the east. We took a look under the wood floor replacement in the living room (which, by the way, is most attractive and in the eighteenth century parquet style) and under this we found a partial covering of original terra cotta floor tiles and the pink sand which is what the tiles in 1553 were set in.. Apparently, many of these original tiles were used to repair the tile floors in the floor of the west side of the villa - as the west side appears to be completely original as does the great center hall..

On the second floor, on the east side, we found a more recent wooden floor, which apparently was put in to keep the feet of the children warm in the winter months. We took a chance and started to remove the wood, and underneath was the same fine original Venetian terrazzo pavement that the rest of the second floor featured. Some of the second floor rooms had the terrazzo floors painted over with a dark brown stain.

We arranged for a floor-polishing specialist to come and remove the paint and polish the floors on the second floor and they came out magnificently. All of the floors were original and in excellent condition. On the balconies it was necessary to make some repairs to the floors but they were mainly still original as well.. It was also necessary to reset stones and blocks of marble in the wide front and back stairways , which slope, to the gardens. .

Walls and ceilings, frescoes and plasterwork

Fortunately the walls and the ceilings were, for the most part, intact. They were covered with frescoes done by *Mattia Bortoloni* - over 100 frescoes including overdoors, of which only three were in substandard condition, but we were able to obtain expert restorers to bring them back. The rest may have been restored almost to perfection by the Council of the Villas of the Veneto when they owned the villa. .

We did not touch the Renaissance ceiling over the main hall of the Piano Nobile for many years. The ceiling was very high - as mentioned - about 30 feet up. It appeared to be in excellent condition - with original painted beams - elaborately decorated with a stencil design - and sometimes this type of decoration is called a "Sansovino ceiling" - popular in the sixteenth century.

The higher ceiling in the great hall above was identical. We also had similar ceilings (with other colors predominant) in the second floor bedrooms. These ceiling beams appear to be solid, but they are actually boxed, as can be seen from the attic window overlooking the second-floor center hall. We had an expert do some restoration on this ceiling. We did some restoration on portico ceilings where needed. Another major item for restoration was the peeling gray paint on the walls of the great halls. This was carefully removed to reveal the original light finish - on the walls and the four great ionic columns in the large center hall of the *Piano Nobile* as well.

Doors were made where they were missing

There were no outside heavy wooden doors on the second floor - just paned glass and part wood doors - with insets surrounding the doors of colored glass (probably added in the nineteenth century) This was on the second floor of the villa leading to the balconies to the north and to the south.

On the south side there was also a door missing to the second-floor east side stairway to the south rooms and the two balconies - leaving an open staircase where a second-story-man could enter the house with ease. We had these large doors made and the special "antique" metal work created for them.

Upstairs, we took several antique bedroom doors to Florence to repaint and decorate. Downstairs, the beautiful antique doors were refinished and repaired where necessary.

We were told that the roof had been worked on - beams in the attic supporting the roof had been checked and repaired by the Council (*Ente*) and replaced where necessary and the shutters had been repaired as they had been worn and broken as happens over the years. However, after fifteen years, we again restored the shutters. Mr. Marulli took them down and repaired them individually and put them back and painted them.

Souvenirs of World War II

The exterior, the parts outside of the villa itself was something else. First I noticed deep bullet marks on the plaster of the large pillar-posts by the wall and gates in front of the villa. I inquired as to whether these bullets had come from German planes during the war. I was told that no, that American planes were responsible for the damage to the posts and also for the blowing out of the windows on the west side of the villa.

I immediately ordered that all of the damaged plaster on the posts be removed, leaving only the bricks showing. I hoped that the townspeople had forgotten all about the war. Only later, I found that when the Americans finally arrived they gave food to the

citizens, which was much appreciated. One man told me that he would have starved but for the Americans.

We were told that the German major who was occupying the villa during the war, left on foot - walking west toward Castelfranco as the Americans approached.. German soldiers also occupied the *barchese* along the street beside the villa during the war, but we are told that they did not harm the villa. The Mariotto family lived in part of the building next to the villa and Ilario's mother cleaned the villa for the German major. Ilario was born and raised in an apartment on the second floor of that *barchese*

A central location. Advantages of having the villa in the town

Even when we completed much of the restoration and were in residence, we would go across the street to the *Albergo* and *Caffe Palladio* for meals - and quite often, Sylvana Miolo (who with her husband owned the *caffè*) would bring the meals to us at the villa if we had company. It was a perfect arrangement - all the advantages of living in the villa with the service of the hotel. The custodian, Epifanio Marulli, and his wife, Elena, also lived nearby - a block away - and could easily and conveniently come to the villa each day as often as needed. Elena also made the curtains, and full-length table covers for side tables as well as pillow covers, seat cushions, and over-bed draperies. . The florist (Luigina Squizzato-now married to Fabio Scapinello) was in the piazza across from the villa, and floral arrangements were easily made - including dried flowers arranged for decoration throughout the villa.. (The florist still sends flowers for us to our Piombino Dese friends).

The land outside of the villa occupies only a few acres. This wouldn't be much for a well-to-do owner of a villa - and originally there were hundreds of acres of farmland to the south of the villa. The Cornaro family owned the villa until 1807 and the coming of Napoleon - at which time it was sold and an inventory was made of everything in the villa. Dr. Douglas Lewis discovered this inventory in his research on the villa along with many boxes of letters and documents concerning the history of the Villa Cornaro housed in a library in Venice. The villa is well recorded down to minute details.

Fortunately for us, the villa is almost in the center of the small town of Piombino Dese. This was perfect for us, as those who helped us, (the custodian, and the various specialists and workers), all were within a few minutes walk of the villa and could come quickly if there was a problem. It rarely took longer than fifteen minutes for someone to arrive and fix a problem. We had no phone for years, but we could walk to the hotel across the street to call - or could walk to the Marulli house a block away to phone or ask them to help with some special emergency. Another advantage, the train, eastbound to Venice or westbound to Bassano, was about a block away from the villa.

It took us less than half an hour to get from the villa to Venice and to be on a boat on the Grand Canal.

Being in the center of the town had many advantages. Owners of great villas situated in the countryside amid acres of farmland at this time, with more people going to work in factories, did (and do) have difficulty in getting help - while we had little or no difficulty as it was not necessary to get people to live at the villa as their homes were nearby. When we did have to arrange for the Venetian specialist workers to live near the villa for a few months to do the cleaning and repair to the front of the villa, this could easily be

arranged at the little hotel - the *Albergo Palladio* across the street. Actually, as it turned out, our local workmen were better able to do this resurfacing repair work, and they continued doing it after the Venetian specialists left.

Restoration of the gates and security

Another major piece of restoration was the restoration of the gates. These were ornamental as well as massive. In front of the villa were three pairs of elaborate wrought iron gates, the center crowned with a *stemma* (family crest) which Julie got up on a ladder and restored. Beside the villa was a West gate to use when entering through the *barchese*; and at the south end of the park on the other side of the bridge was a gate and gate posts (one of which was inclined like the Tower of Pisa.) The major front gates weighed at least 1,000 pounds. The gates were badly rusted and parts were broken.

Some tips of the spear-like finials were missing completely. These gates were taken to the metal repair shop. Mr. Bartolozzi lived (and had his workshop) not a block away on the *Viale Stazione*. He was used to handling (and making) large metal fences and gates that people felt they needed to keep housebreakers out. Because he specialized in big metal work, he was set up to handle our repairs and replacements and to do the work rapidly and at a very reasonable cost. Mr. Marulli then lacquered and oiled the gates each year with his special formula.

Later, when we had break-ins at the villa, we added an alarm system and Mr. Bartolozzi made the bars for the windows which secure the shutters. He created a clever design, strong but unobtrusive and out of sight when the windows and shutters are open.

Stones, brick walls, and uncovering a fountain

There was a lot of work to be done on the brick walls all around the villa, and Ilario Mariotto handled this work. He started by taking off the posters and billboards on the front brick wall, and Mr. Marulli ordered a sign (a type of special license we paid for) which prohibits the placing of billboards on the property.

In addition, when we were not in residence in the villa, Ilario got the idea that a stone sidewalk should be built around the entire villa as was the custom before gutters were used. (We also added new gutters where they seemed needed.) The stone walk would catch the rain from the roof and keep the basement (*cantina*) dry. He used smooth rounded river rocks in the antique manner and it looked very good. I couldn't do much about it, since when we arrived at the villa the work had already been completed. Fine!

Along this same line, he did rockwork in a fountain that was uncovered. On the grounds there was a lot of "uncovering" to do.

First the walk from the front gate to the front stairs of the villa. This apparently was fashioned with large square cut marble stones, but it had become covered with grass. To Ilario Mariotto, this seemed not to be right for an important villa. So he started to remove some of the grass to see what lay beneath. He was exactly right. Under the grass was a cut marble stone walk, a fine part of the entrance to the front of the villa.

For further "uncoverings," we went around to the back of the villa as a small portion of the grass in the center seemed to be different from the rest of the grass in the south park of the villa. What emerged was a large circular fountain of carved stone. We traced the water line and discovered that there was a well and so we had it professionally deepened

enough so that a steady fountain of fresh water came out of the artesian well. (We would fill pitchers of cool fresh water daily for the house from the fountain.) Ilario created a stone pavement in the “antique” Roman style for the bottom of the pool surrounding the fountain using the smooth rounded stones and creating a geometric pattern.

We planted flowers around the stone rim of the fountain pool and this made a pretty center for the south park of the villa. A well that served the house was deepened, filling the water tank.

The park and front garden

We added two rows of six evergreen trees along the center of the park - and these grew to be very impressive until lightning struck one or two after we left, and so they were removed, but for twenty years, they were impressive. When we bought the villa, there were many fruit trees growing all over the park and these were cut down under the order of Dr. Douglas Lewis so he could get a good photograph of the south side of the villa for his book. Actually, this made a pretty expanse of green lawn and a good view of the villa, and we added the evergreen trees.

The bridge is an added bonus and we, at one time, believed that Palladio also designed it. At one time the stream had been wider and the villa owner and guests would put their boats out and row around a bit, but the stream had become lower over the years (except on the rare occasion of a very large and heavy rain storm).

We asked Ilario Mariotto to repair the bridge, and this he did quite expertly, using antique bricks (of which he had gathered a large supply for us from neighboring houses that had been torn down) and he also created a stairway.

From an old photograph, it was seen that there was a stone stairway down to a landing so that boaters could board the boats in the little lake. So Ilario reconstructed the stairway and the platform exactly as the photograph showed it - with the oval river rock stones and antique bricks.

Ilario also did the restoration of the window on the west stairwell where the metal door had been put, going out to the children’s wooden shed outhouse toilets. He also removed the toilets and he restored and rebuilt the garden wall beside these and removed a large ugly bird aviary. He also put a “new” (antique tile) roof on the *lavanderia* (laundry house) outside the villa by the west gate.

As for the front garden, Mr. Marulli replaced the boxwood bushes where they had died and the oval floral gardens, edged with boxwood, were planted each Spring with red flowers. Large terra cotta pots were purchased for the front and back stone stairways, and flowers were placed in these seasonally (pansies in the spring and begonias and geraniums thrived in the summer and fall).

The walls on the outside of the villa and graffiti on the south portico and in the attic

For the repairs and restorations, we had to get permission from the Superintendent, as mentioned earlier. Until we secured these permissions, and usually these were in writing, we could do nothing. The law dealing with national monuments is very strict in Italy. For violations, one might even be sent to jail, and certainly fined.

Not that we wanted to remove them, but if we had wanted to, we could not. The *graffiti* on the south side of the villa (and in the attic) were quite old. Written on the

south portico walls in red chalk crayon were some dates of family births and special events - dating from the 1600s. There is also a lot of *graffiti* in the attic - some of it, I am told, written by servants, and some later bits are written by soldiers. There is a large seventeenth or early eighteenth century line drawing of a gentleman with a tall hat and wearing high heeled boots and this is partially covered over by a later strip of smooth polished plaster put on the wall in the eighteenth century to discourage the mice from climbing the wall and reaching the ceiling rafters.

The very large rafters and the ceiling and roof flat terra cotta tiles (under the curved roof tiles) are exposed underneath and can be clearly seen from the attic rooms. .

The late Jeane Dixon, whose prophecies are well known, was a good friend and although she never came to the villa, she described it to us and also told of the attic rooms where some of the servants lived and how they would look below (through inside attic windows to the great second floor hall) to see what the people were doing below. She also told us that the riding horses and carriage horses many years ago, before the age of the motor car, would drink water drawn from a well at the front of the villa . (and there are wells by the steps at the front of the villa which we actually never reopened.)

Now as to the outside of the villa, Palladio placed the villa so that the long side (center block and wings) would face the north and most of the tall windows are on the north. On the southern side, which much of the time faces the sun, it is hot in the summer and there are few windows. Windows are in the large original worn brick circular stairwells - which act as a buffer against the heat of the southern exposure. On the southern side, the double level columned portico is recessed so that the tall windows in the portico (upstairs and downstairs) are shaded. The sun reaches the north side of the villa only slightly in mid-summer. On a late fall or winter day, or early spring day, the sun comes quite far into the great halls from the four tall windows on the south porticos and is a beautiful sight.

Little did we realize that it would be almost all but impossible to repair, clean and restore the north side of the villa. For years we were denied permission to clean it. We could only do some obviously necessary restoration including filling of broken areas and the recarving of a missing piece of the capital. Fortunately, after about ten years, a new Superintendent of Monuments was appointed, Arch. Gabriella Gabrielli Pross, and she was a great friend of the villa and of us and saw no reason that the villa could not be restored on the front. She did, however, require that we get specialists from Venice to come and do this the way that it was originally done.

We retained a team of three plaster experts to mix the special formula (specialists in *marmorino* and antique surfaces) to come from Venice and stay and do the work. Arrangements were made for them to stay and have their meals at our expense at the little hotel (*Albergo Palladio*) across from the villa.

First, however, the villa was pressure steam cleaned and a solution to cut into the mold and remove it was added to the steam. We learned a lot about Andrea Palladio's special mixture as well as his use of brick dust under the plaster formula - which kept the plaster dry. However, at first the experts put too much brick dust on, in our opinion, as the pink brick dust showed through the plaster finish slightly (particularly when wet). The plaster formula included sand, marble dust, very small pieces of marble, brick dust, calcio (chalky plaster) and a binding material like cement.

We put the experts up as boarders at the *Albergo Palladio* and supplied their weekly paychecks (which were considerably higher than we had been paying for our local labor.) But the change was magnificent. The villa looked cream colored and breathtakingly beautiful when the work was finished. However, the superintendent would not let us put a thick coating of *marmorino* on the top surface and so it will not last as long as it would have if we had been allowed to use the *marmorino* (which is strong - and smooth - like a coat of marble.)

We were amused (and a little jealous) that the owner of the Villa Rotunda went ahead and restored the Villa Rotunda while we were restoring the Villa Cornaro and did it his way - with the use of a thick *marmorino* finish - and he refused to go along with orders. The story made the newspapers.

They nearly fined him and almost put him in jail, but he is an important person and said that he was paying for this himself - not asking for funds from the government - and he would do it the way he wanted to!

In our case, we did suggest to the experts that they use less of the brick dust and we assisted our local specialist, Angelo, with the mixture. Mario Formentin acted as our local general contractor for this and did a good job. The front of the villa was covered with scaffolding while the work was being done. The Superintendent did have someone come from her office to see what we were doing. The representative apparently felt that our work passed muster, and we were not stopped. We also did restoration on the east and west side of the villa where the plaster had been damaged or chipped off.

We had an earthquake and then we restored the small cracks on the south side of the villa. The villa was not much damaged (just a few cracks) because it sits on a virtual lake of subterranean water and when the earthquake came, the villa just moved easily back and forth and did not shake.

Dr. Douglas Lewis and Mr. Marulli were in the villa when one of the earthquakes struck. The big door to the south portico on the second floor opened and the floor started to tilt. They ran down the stairwell and outside to the south park - and looked - and watched in horror as the villa rocked back and forth.

Collecting antique furniture for the villa

Next, the antique furniture. We started to collect antique furniture of the eighteenth century in 1955, long before we purchased the villa in 1969.

We particularly chose painted Italian furniture and we collected as much of it as we could find - where we lived in Washington, D.C. and in New York. Much was bought privately as well as at auctions, particularly the smaller auctions in New York. We also purchased from dealers - particularly after buying the villa, when we purchased a good number of pieces (virtually a truckload at a time) in Florence, and we continued to buy antiques in Florence over the years. Some was stolen in break-ins.

We also bought antiques in Venice, and we were fortunate to have found some sixteenth century pieces in Washington, New York and Boston. One Renaissance bed was purchased from a dealer in Boston who had obtained it from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. We sent many antiques to the villa from the United States. We did send some back when antiques were stolen, but then we purchased additional antiques in Italy.

The end of our ownership of the Villa Cornaro

To go back for a moment to the purchase of the villa. When we bid on the villa, we thought we were offering a fair price. The Council (*Ente*) rejected our bid, But then we were determined to make the villa our European home and we felt that the villa needed us as well, and that we were uniquely suited to appreciate it and restore it and furnish it. Thus we bid more than the asking price. We finally got the O.K. to buy the villa - signing the papers a year later (July 3, 1969). Originally we had thought that it would not take a long time to get the final Italian government approval - from all of the necessary authorities.

So now how about selling it? And why did we want to sell it? Actually, we had not planned to sell it, but when we ran into problems with the local mayor and council (*Sindaco* and *Consiglio*) who wanted to expropriate it from us and make it into a town civic center, we realized that we needed to get it into a higher price category. We had not paid a great deal for the villa, and the town council saw this low figure and thought that they could expropriate it. However, the Superintendent of Monuments in Venice and the Minister of Culture in Rome did not want to have the villa in the hands of the town. The town had a reputation for allowing their properties (such as their town hall and their library) to run down and then they would ask large sums from the government for restoration - something like a "cash cow."

We fought the town for eight years, (and have large boxes of papers, reports, and letters to show for it) and finally (with the help of the Minister in Rome and Superintendent of Monuments in Venice and the American Ambassador) got the matter under temporary control, but were afraid it would pop up again and unless the price were higher, the town might find it easy to expropriate. The town would have to pay (by law) as much as the last sale price and, thus, in an expropriation could not pay less than the latest owner had paid.

So we advertised the villa for sale and were not flooded with offers, but did get a few. The most excitement came from the town Mayor (*Sindaco*) who said we were putting it up for *auktion*.

We were not putting it up for auction, but asked Sotheby's to handle the sale through their international real estate division. We had given them a price, but said that the sale was subject to the approval of the buyer - our approval of the buyer. We were offering our Titian at auction through Sotheby's at that time, but not the villa.

As it turned out, Sotheby's sold both in 1969 for about the same price - the Titian, however, brought a bit more than the villa.

Over the twenty years that we owned the villa, we had fitted into the life of our little town of Piombino Dese. In fact, I counted at least 159 people I called by the first name. Several little girls were named *Giulia* for my wife, Julia, and several little boys were named for me - *Riccardo*. We were invited to our neighbors' homes for elaborate five course meals and we entertained about 125 neighbors at a reception at the villa each year when we came to stay at the villa. It was an easy thing to do, as the Miosols brought everything to the villa from the *Caffe Palladio* across the street. Their two sons, Leonardo and Riccardo, would serve - as did Sylvana, who prepared everything.

At any rate, we got significant offers. One was from an Italian lady who wanted the villa for her son. However, she thought the villa looked too much like a museum and

wanted to furnish it more casually. Unfortunately, her son was killed in an automobile accident. A second important prospective purchaser was an American woman with a large business involved mainly (as it seemed) in company takeovers and advice on such. She had several large homes - Palm Beach and Connecticut and New York (Tuxedo Park), but we felt that she really did not have the time to keep track of the villa and manage the problems that would come up.

The third prospect was a publisher of an important architectural magazine in Germany. We wanted to be sure that the German buyer would be welcomed into the town, and so we spoke to a good friend, perhaps the most admired woman in the town, and asked her advice. She felt that there might be some antagonism to a German buyer, and so we went on to the next prospective buyer, and this buyer was actually two people (or so it seemed). One was a Central European couple and the other was a native of Hong Kong. They offered a handsome price and seemed most determined to buy, but we felt that this buyer (or these buyers) would not fit into the town and that they would therefore never be happy in the town - and also their interest was more in the Art Deco period. They didn't want the Italian antiques and we were not even sure that they would open the villa to the public. We never signed anything with the Italian government that said we would have to regularly open the villa to the public, but we did, and we enjoyed doing it, and we wanted this to continue to be the practice - as the villa is such a masterpiece (and the design is so copied, worldwide).

The buyer, Carl Gable of Atlanta, Georgia, with his wife Sally

So then we moved on to our final prospective buyer, a couple from Atlanta Georgia, a prominent corporate lawyer and his wife. We felt after various discussions and get togethers that these were the ones who would be best for the villa and for the town and would, in all likelihood, carry on things as we had.

In fact, we wanted them to be the buyers, whether or not they would reach the offer of the European and Hong Kong prospects. They didn't offer that much, but we induced them to buy by including most all of the furniture in the house. (They could move in with just their suitcases and tooth brushes).

We thought that selling the villa would be easy - certainly easier than buying it. It was easier, but not much.

For us to buy the house, the Minister of Finance, Columbo -(later Prime Minister Columbo) had to sign two orders. One order was to sell the villa and the other to authorize the government's selling it to us.

Now to sell the villa to our prospective buyers, the Minister of Culture had to approve. But it was not simply to "approve". If the Minister wanted to, he could purchase the villa for the same amount of money as our prospective buyer (Carl Gable) had offered. Everyone held his breath waiting for the Minister's decision. He had much material to go over, detailed background of the buyers, including their education, culture and financial standing. We pointed out to the Minister that the Gables had a son who was a student of architecture and who was particularly interested in having his parents buy the villa. A daughter was a lawyer. They also had a second son who was, as I recall, studying to be an engineer. The whole family seemed to want the villa.

In the end, after some weeks, the Minister of Culture decided to permit Carl Gable to

buy the Villa Cornaro. We felt that Sally and Carl were the best buyers and we feel even more that this is true today. We were there to greet them when they came in late October 1969, after signing the papers, to receive the keys and we stayed with them for a few days to show them everything. We also gave them a party - to introduce them to their neighbors - inviting the townspeople to come and also we invited a harpist to play in the great hall. The guests brought many bouquets of flowers and these were decorating the reception rooms when we left. They have maintained the villa beautifully - opened it to the public, sponsored benefits, entertained neighbors, and recently did major replacement work on the roof and expertly restored the family portrait statues to reveal the original *marmorino* finish. The Gables have established an excellent set of web pages for Palladian villas and Carl Gable has written a book on Murano Glass.

The maintenance of the villa over the years

What about the maintenance of the villa over the years? Fortunately, we were able to secure (inherit actually) a good custodian, Epifanio Marulli, whose reputation in the town was excellent. He could repair almost anything from electrical problems to plumbing, could do carpentry, and could do gardening and use the power mower which we purchased for him to use. He would polish the wooden floors to a brilliant shine with wax and buff the floors with our electric buffer.

He would wash the tile floors and paint and varnish the wood frames on the windows. repaint and restore shutters as needed, oil and varnish the gates, and white wash the cantina (almost annually) repairing the walls where occasionally, with the dampness, plaster fell off. Mrs. Marulli (Elena) would help him clean the house, and would wash the curtains and she and Mr. Marulli would rehang them on the rods and rings that Mr. Marulli had selected and put up. She also made these curtains for the villa and made many special things for us like the Italian flag we always put out on the flagpole (attached to the second floor front balcony) on special occasions.

The flag was made (and first displayed) the year that the Italians won the International Soccer Championship. She would dust and polish the furniture, cut flowers from the garden, and water the geraniums in the pots on the villa steps - front and back. If we had a party, she and Mr. Marulli would see that everything was spotlessly clean afterwards.

When we were to arrive at the villa, the Marulli family would have the villa open, the shutters and windows open, flowers on the center hall table, everything clean and polished and the beds freshly made. Mr. Marulli would meet us at the airport in Venice - or at the train if we were coming from Milan - and act as our chauffeur for whatever reason we might require a chauffeur. The Marullis were like our family and would invite us to their home on special occasions and to family weddings. (We still keep in touch.)

Mr. Marulli (Epifanio) could set the burglar alarm, and managed to keep the housebreakers away all year long. He and Mrs. Marulli kept a set of keys to the villa and when we were not there, they kept everything in order and managed any emergencies. They also opened the villa to visitors during the afternoon on the weekends, May to September, and to groups by special appointments.

Later, the Miolos (Giocomo and Sylvana, Leonardo and Riccardo) took over this, but for most of the years we were in residence, the Marulli family would come and open the

villa shutters in the morning and come and close up the villa in the evening and open the villa to visitors..

The villa is an Italian national treasure, There were no property taxes on it. We could have borrowed money from the government to restore the house (and at a low rate) and we have heard of many villa owners who received an amount of at least 20% of what they had borrowed after making the last repayment - and in some cases an outright gift of funds necessary to restore a national monument.

We were absolutely required to have fire insurance and in 1969 it cost \$13 a year! We did add insurance for visitors and antiques and liability for employees, etc., and the insurance did go up very considerably - but at first it was \$13.

At \$1.00 to \$1.25 per hour for restoration, and even with some pay rises for restoration done over the years, our total outlay was far less than it would have been if restoration was started twenty years later - when we sold the villa in 1989. On that date, the plumbers, woodworkers, electricians, etc., were up to \$22.00 and hour. So at the rate of \$22 an hour, what would our restoration costs have been in total? Somewhere between \$2,000,000 and \$2,500,000. What it would cost today to do what we did, one can only guess, and few could or would afford it?

As a postscript, the amount of funds we received from the sale of the Villa Cornaro was put into a charitable remainder unitrust, which will benefit various charities and colleges and universities, including the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Harvard University, The American University, Washington University, George Washington University, and CCNY -The City College of New York founded by my great Uncle Townsend Harris when he was President of the New York Board of Education.

