

BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL GIOVANNETTI

Michael Joseph Giovannetti was born Michele Giuseppe Giovannetti in a pastoral region of Italy on May 19, 1947. Post World War II days presented many challenges to everyone residing in the war-devastated areas of Tuscany, especially to Sara and Luigi Giovannetti and their 10 children; Michael was the fifth or middle child. Their small village near Lucca, not far from Florence, birth of the Renaissance, afforded the family a healthy, simple life style, but limited opportunities for an education beyond mandatory elementary grades. Michael was very fortunate; however, for at the age of 12 he was honored with an educational sponsorship, thanks to the generosity of his maternal aunt and uncle, to travel to California for the primary purpose of receiving a more complete formal education.

In October 1959, after having completed grade 6, young "Giuseppe" as he was known by family and friends, received his official documents (Student Visa,) and his international journey began. Eleven days by ship from Genova to New York, and four long days by train, a famished young Italian boy arrived in Fresno. He often recalls many humorous and some not so humorous moments of that journey. When relating travel stories to his middle school Spanish language students, years later, some of them would ask: "Senor. G., what was the name of the ship you used for travel? Was it the Pinta, the Nina or the Santa Maria?" Michael should have known better than to involve middle school students in such vulnerable conversations.

After completing secondary schools, his Visa was extended to attend local universities, ultimately completing a Secondary Teaching Credential, undergraduate and graduate degrees in Spanish and Italian, as well as in Educational Leadership. Michael began teaching Spanish and Italian at local secondary schools and colleges, eventually moving into school administration, curriculum and instruction. He worked in three major school districts in the Central San Joaquin Valley, holding various teaching and administrative positions at site and district office levels, including a shared Superintendent position. His K-12 Chapter formally ended 33 years later when Michael decided to retire in order to devote more time to his growing family of six children and four grandchildren. His wonderful wife Silvana recently joined him in retirement.

Michael could not stay away from his Alma Mater, however, and when contacted by Fresno State's Administration to join the School of Education in order to share some of his experiences with a new generation of educational leaders, he naturally accepted. He was recently honored with an even greater challenge; to fill the huge and very successful shoes of Mr. Rich Firpo as Executive Director of The Renaissance Group. Little did Michael know that 61 years after leaving his native Italy, birth of the Renaissance, he would be privileged to be associated with another, no less significant Renaissance Group. After meeting some of the organization's Board members at the Annual Spring Conference held at Fresno State University, Michael concluded the chemistry of the group was perfect, as he promised to continue the noble mission of TRG to make the preparation of teachers a university wide effort. After all, teacher preparation is or should be "Everybody's Business."