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In Memoriam: Charles Speroni

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## In Memoriam: Charles Speroni

On August 28, 1984, Charles Speroni, long associated with Italian Studies at UCLA, passed away.

Charles Speroni was born in Santa Fiora, Tuscany, on November 2, 1911, and after finishing high school in Rome in 1929, came to the United States. He earned his Ph.D. in Romance Languages from UC, Berkeley in 1938 and married his lifelong companion, Carmela Corica, in 1939. As a scholar his main focus was Renaissance literature, especially as it reflected folk traditions; many of his studies, for example, treated proverbs and proverbial phrases, wellerisms, customs and popular song which are collected in a number of University of California publications. He is probably best remembered for: *Wit and Wisdom of the Italian Renaissance, Lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti* (selected and annotated by C. S. with Irving Stone; all of these letters formed the basis for Irving Stone's *The Agony and the Ecstasy*), and, of course, by more than one generation of Italian language students, for his *Basic Italian* (with Carlo Golino), soon to appear in its 6th edition. At the time of his death, Speroni was revising his Berkeley dissertation, a pioneering work on elements of folklore in Dante, a study which is presently being revised for publication. In addition, he co-edited *The Shape of the Past*, a volume of studies in honor of his close friend Franklin D. Murphy.

He founded the Department of Italian at UCLA in 1935 and served as its chair from 1949 to 1956. He was both editor of *The Modern Language Forum*, and co-founder and associate editor of

*The Italian Quarterly*. Speroni was made dean, first of UCLA Summer Sessions, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the UC Education Abroad Program, and dean of the College of Fine Arts from 1968 to his retirement in December, 1979. He founded the Los Angeles Chapter of the Dante Alighieri Society and was a charter board member of the Italian Heritage Center Foundation. He was made "Commendatore al Merito della Repubblica Italiana" in 1973, "Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques" in 1976, and he was awarded the Alumni Award of Excellence for University Service by the UCLA Alumni Foundation on its 50th Anniversary in June, 1984.

A special Memorial Concert of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (op. 125, in D minor: "*Choral*") in his honor was held Wednesday November 7, 1984 in Royce Hall. A memorial fund endowing scholarships for students in the College of Fine Arts has been established.

Luisa Del Giudice