‘I love you all’

John Felice
1923–2008

Last winter, John Felice, the founder and guiding spirit of the Rome Center, passed away at his home in Glenview, Illinois.

In this special edition of Il Bollettino, please find a celebration of John Felice’s life and legacy. Although these pages can never do justice to a man who lived as rich a life as John, hopefully, there will be something here to make you smile, and to remember a man who made the world a better place by living in it.

CELEBRATING A LIFE, MOURNING A LOSS 2
MESSAGE FROM KATE FELICE 3
IN HIS OWN WORDS... 4
RECALLING A LEGEND 6
Celebrating a life, mourning a loss

Remembering an angel, a father, and a friend

An excerpt from an eulogy given at John Felice’s memorial service by Emilio Iodice, director of the John Felice Rome Center.

Kate, Father Garanzini, the faculty, the staff of Loyola University, the family and friends of John Felice, and the thousands of his children here and around the world who were his sons and daughters at the Rome Center, welcome to this ceremony where we celebrate a glorious life and greet John not for the last time, because he will always be with us.

John Felice truly led an extraordinary life which was filled with action, compassion, courage, creation, planning, building, and most of all wisdom, dedication, and love for God, his fellow man, and the splendid companion who was always at his side. What a glorious time he had on this planet.

He built not only institutions, buildings, ideas, and programs, but he built lives; many lives, and touched hearts, minds, and set examples in the tradition of the religious order that stayed in his heart and soul. John Felice was a true Jesuit in the beginning and at the end. He lived the principles and practiced the ideals and helped transmit them to others, thousands of others.

One angel I know is there to greet him in a special way. When I first visited John at his home, I brought him a CD of a singer I knew he would enjoy. It was of Mario Lanza, and John said that Lanza was his favorite and that his voice calmed him, gave him pleasure, courage, and peace. I imagine that Mario is there with John, at this very moment, singing to him and the thousands of others.

A joyful time he had, and we celebrate a glorious life in the Ave Maria, Panis Angelicus, and the Lord’s Prayer, there with John, at this very moment, singing to him and the thousands of others.

May God bless you, Kate, and may God and John look with all the angels and saints welcoming him to his new home in the Kingdom of our Savior.

The ideals and help that he built, the principles and practiced, the ideals and helped transmit them to others, thousands of others.

For most of you, life has gone on and assumed its routine—hopefully with occasional grateful thoughts for John in your lives and your experiences with him in Rome influenced you for the better. For me, it has been a time of reorganizing my life without John in it, missing his daily presence—his wise and calming counsel on the many things I have had to do now without him. It’s also been a very busy time of travel including trips to Oregon for his burial and a bittersweet return to Rome! I hope you will forgive me if haven’t yet acknowledged all of your many kindnesses to me in the aftermath of John’s death. The going is slow for me, but I assure you of my good intentions in this regard. Your many beautiful cards and letters with their heartfelt sentiments, the participation of so many of you in the services for John, and your generous donations to the John Felice Rome Center have been a great source of comfort to me.

Of course, I had the occasion to visit the Rome Center many times while in Rome. I assure you that it is flourishing and evolving under new leadership and is ever so vibrant. I was warmly welcomed by everyone, including so many students of this year’s class who had heard of John, but who did not have the chance to know him. They had a most beautiful concelebrated Mass for John in the chapel followed by a lovely reception where I was able to meet and greet so many of this year’s enthusiastic class members. This service also gave those in Rome who have been associated with the Center and John for so many years, much needed peace since they could not all travel to the beautiful service at Loyola University Chicago in February.

Above all, remember how fulfilled John’s life was to have all of you in it.

In spite of heavy snow, hundreds of mourners traveled to Loyola University Chicago’s Madonna della Strada Chapel on February 7, 2008, to attend the Mass of Christian Burial for John Felice. A cadre of Jesuits, lead by Michael J. Garanzini, S.J., president of Loyola University Chicago, celebrated the Mass along with a packed congregation.

Emilio Iodice, director of the John Felice Rome Center, Leonard Sichko, Jr., president of the JFRC alumni board, Father Garanzini, and Kate Felice offered special remembrances at the Mass. Lawrence Reuter, S.J., gave the homily; A video recording of John’s service can be viewed at LUC.edu/romecenter/JF_ondemand.shtml. A memorial service also took place at the JFRC and John was buried in Portland, Oregon.

A Message from Kate Felice

On the feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, six months had passed since the death of our dear John. It was a fitting date to reflect on how we have all adjusted to John’s absence in our lives. For most of you, life has gone on and assumed its routine—hopefully with occasional grateful thoughts for John in your lives and your experiences with him in Rome influenced you for the better. For me, it has been a time of reorganizing my life without John in it, missing his daily presence—his wise and calming counsel on the many things I have had to do now without him. It’s also been a very busy time of travel including trips to Oregon for his burial and a bittersweet return to Rome! I hope you will forgive me if haven’t yet acknowledged all of your many kindnesses to me in the aftermath of John’s death. The going is slow for me, but I assure you of my good intentions in this regard. Your many beautiful cards and letters with their heartfelt sentiments, the participation of so many of you in the services for John, and your generous donations to the John Felice Rome Center have been a great source of comfort to me.

Of course, I had the occasion to visit the Rome Center many times while in Rome. I assure you that it is flourishing under new leadership and is ever so vibrant. I was warmly welcomed by everyone, including so many students of this year’s class who had heard of John, but who did not have the chance to know him. They had a most beautiful concelebrated Mass for John in the chapel followed by a lovely reception where I was able to meet and greet so many of this year’s enthusiastic class members. This service also gave those in Rome who have been associated with the Center and John for so many years, much needed peace since they could not all travel to the beautiful service at Loyola University Chicago in February.

Please be assured of my desire to stay connected with all of you as much as possible, even though distance and other commitments may separate us. Above all, remember how fulfilled John’s life was to have all of you in it and remember how proud he was of your many wonderful and worthwhile accomplishments, which you so often attributed to your time spent in Rome. You have been a great joy and presence in my life as well, and I continue to be equally proud to know and love all of you and to pray for your continued happiness.

May God continue to love and bless each one of you and your loved ones.

Kate Felice
A famed storyteller, John Felice had a wealth of tales and an effervescent style that enchanted his audience. The following stories, told in Felice’s own voice, were taken from an oral interview with Bob Seal, Loyola’s dean of libraries, in 2007. You can find more stories on the Web at [URL].

**In his own words...**

**Patton’s lesson**

W ell, I was in the British Army. I was in the Intelligence Service. And when the Americans came, two of us were transferred to the American forces. And I remember the first time they brought in tents, they had everything. My goodness—cigarette cartons thrown on the floor and we barely had a ration of half a cigarette a day. However, there was an American, Captain Crowe, he was our angel, custodian angel. Showed us around, where are the things and that.

So about two or three days after I was with the Americans, there was a notice that the general was going to speak to us. I didn’t know who the gen-
eral was. So we all went in this big tent and I was in front with the other British. And General Patton came in with a stick under his arm, went up on the platform and he started speaking. Screaming! Something about Carthage, and doing this as if he’s herding horses.

…and Captain Crowe said, “I bet nobody understood us and I was the first one to ask, “What did he say?”

And after he spoke to them, you know, the work of the embassy and what they do, and this and that, it was funny. He asked the students if they had any questions. And one of the students raised his hand and he said, “If we are caught in some trouble, should we call the American embassy?”

I said, “What do you mean?” I asked the authorities about him and they said that he was arrested. Oh my goodness! In those days, I called the British Embassy. They said, “We’ll look for him and we’ll try to get him out.” Within five minutes he called back. He knew where he was. They told me to take a taxi over and we would get him out together. So I got an interpreter and went.”

What the professor did, he went to the market and bought an icon, but old icons, not imitations, you were not supposed to take out of the country. So the Russian interpreter, when we got there, said, “He doesn’t know about this and that.” So they said, “all right. Let him go.”

Who you gonna call?

E ven in Rome, if you go to the embassy, or if something happens to you, all they do is give you a list of lawyers. What is funny about this is we have one of our alumni—I can’t remember his name—he was in the Foreign Service. And he was at the embassy of Rome. He was a senior officer. And once I invited him to give the lecture to the new students. That was in the late ‘80s. And after he spoke to them, you know, the work of the embassy and what they do, and this and that, it was funny. He asked the students if they had any questions. And one of the students raised his hand and he said, “If we are caught in some trouble, should we call the American embassy?”

He says, “No. Call Felice.”

**Box seats for the revolution**

Y ou’d be surprised by the help that the government would give us. We were in Damascus in ’67 or ’68 and the duty office of the American Embassy called me around three in the morning, because I used to report to the embassies where we were. The duty office said to me, “John, it’s better to leave because the revolution is going to start any minute.”

I said, “Any minute? Not!”

“Well,” he said. “It will start early morning.” So I woke up everybody and called the buses at four. We were heading towards the mountains to go into Lebanon. And we arrived there within an hour and a half. You know, Damascus is just in the valley and you can overlook—from the mountains, you can see all Damascus. And when we arrived there, I knew that place. You are in Lebanon; you are not in Syria any more. And there was a coffee place. So, I told him, I said, “Would you prepare breakfast for us?”

He said, “Yes, by all means.” I went to speak to the soldiers who were there in all the trenches. I went to speak to the captain and I said, “Would you allow us to stay because we know something is going to start down there?”

I hardly finished when, mmm, they started firing over there, in the trenches. But we were in Lebanon so we were safe.

**From Russia without icon**

I must say the worst one was when I took the first trip of the students—and there were many, to Russia. And as we were leaving Moscow to return home, around seven in the morning, a student came and he said, you know, he was all nervous, “Dr. Smith didn’t return home.”

I said, “What do you mean?” I asked the authorities about him and they said that he was arrested. Oh my goodness! In those days, I called the British Embassy. They said, “Well, you’ll look for him and we’ll try to get him out.” Within five minutes he called back. He knew where he was. They told me to take a taxi over and we would get him out together. So I got an interpreter and went.”

What the professor did, he went to the market and bought an icon, but old icons, not imitations, you were not supposed to take out of the country. So they followed him. They knew that he bought this and as soon as he arrived at the hotel, vroom! They grabbed him. So the Russian interpreter, when we got there, said, “He doesn’t know about this and that.” So they said, “all right. Let him go.”

**Who you gonna call?**
Recalling a legend

Upon his passing, Loyola received an outpouring of stories, recollections, and reflections from the JFRC community remembering John and the massive influence he had on so many lives. These are excerpts from only a portion of these letters. For more, please visit LUC.edu/entertherestofaddress.

Michelle Widmer-Schultz
(JFRC '87–'88, BA '90)

John Felice realized during my first semester at JFRC in 1987, that due to financial restrictions, I would not be able to stay the entire year. When one of the RAs decided to leave midyear, he offered me the position, and therefore allowed me to remain for the spring semester. As God would have it, I met my husband there in early February. He was a Swiss Guard under JP II at the time, and we celebrated our 20th anniversary of meeting last February. We got to travel to the Holy Land with Pope Paul thanks to John’s connections. Vatican II was in full swing and we got great insights into the process. He gathered a faculty for the Rome Center that was the first pick of the Jesuit system, and provided us with a great educational and cultural experience. Hiding a group of adventurous, slightly rebellious free spirits would have been stressful for most. John, however, was unfazed and seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. More than once, trying to sneak in past curfew, I remember hearing John’s voice, “Kuuucherrrraa, my office. now!”

Ken Kucera
(JFRC ’63–’64, BS ’66)

We got to travel to the Holy Land with Pope Paul thanks to John’s connections. Vatican II was in full swing and we got great insights into the process. He gathered a faculty for the Rome Center that was the first pick of the Jesuit system, and provided us with a great educational and cultural experience. Hiding a group of adventurous, slightly rebellious free spirits would have been stressful for most. John, however, was unfazed and seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. More than once, trying to sneak in past curfew, I remember hearing John’s voice, “Kuuucherrrraa, my office. now!”

Bethany Banner
(JFRC ’98–99, BA ’00)

When I speak, sentences frequently begin with the words “When I was in Rome” or “When I lived in Rome.” I will never forget that year, surreal though it may still seem. It was in Rome that I first tasted blood oranges and panettone. It was that year that I discovered how much I like to travel alone. Rome showed me the world. I will always remember John Felice for giving me this.

Walter G. Coppenrath Jr.
(JFRC ’66–’67, JFRC staff ’70–’72)

When I was quite literally penniless, he gave me food, shelter, and a job. His abundant kindness and generosity not only helped me—they taught me the virtue of those virtues.

Joseph W. Whitaker
(JFRC 65–66, BA ’68)

We were all called into the largest room they had at LURC at the time, only a day or two after we had all arrived in late August 1981. Dr. Felice introduced himself, and almost immediately began to dig into those of us who were trying to stay up with our university credit requirements. Dr. Felice said to us, “Don’t let your formal education class work interfere with that which you are going to learn here in Rome. Those of you who are carrying 15–16 credits, I strongly recommend you drop a class so that you can absorb all that Rome has to offer.” Dr. Felice knew all too well that we were about to have life changing experiences in the Eternal City.

Vincent Driessen
(JFRC fall ’81)

At the end of our class trip to the Middle East, there was a tense moment after we landed at the Cairo airport. There was a Jewish girl on the trip, and the immigration official who was processing us into the country balked at what he recognized as a Jewish name. (This was before Sadat’s recognition of the State of Israel.) At any rate, Padre Felice stepped up, puffed himself up, and assured the guard that the girl, like all the rest of us, was a devout Catholic, and he was appalled that anyone would question her Catholic faith. The guard backed down (one did not dispute with Padre Felice) and we all got into Egypt.

Leonard Slutkowski Jr.
(JFRC ’65–66, BA ’69, MEd ’72)

It is very rare to know a legend during his time.

Excerpt from Loyola magazine, Fall 1996

By Walt Collins

A number of characters have passed through the halls of the JFRC, not the least of whom was John himself, but John remembered one case that he would never forget. “This guy was taking drugs while he was at the Rome Center,” he recalled. “I tried to help him. Nothing worked. Finally the Italian police picked him up. I helped him then, but I advised him, ‘You’ve got to leave.’

“When he got back to the States, the police caught him with drugs, and he blamed me. He thought I’d tipped them off, though I hadn’t. He moved into a hippie commune somewhere and lost all contact with his mother. Eventually, she died.”

Some years later, Felice was informed one day that a visitor was at the receptionist’s desk, his taxi waiting for him. Might he see John Felice for just a moment? “A well-dressed man walked into my office with a tube under his arm. He was the one I’d sent home. ‘My greatest benefactors,’ he told me, ‘were my mother and you. My mother is dead, but I wanted you to see this.’”

From the tube he withdrew a PhD degree is psychology. Then he shook Felice’s hand and returned to his taxi. He flew back to the States the same day.

“If I accomplished just this one thing in my whole life,” said Felice, “it would be worth living 74 years.”

“To a stop only a few feet from Courage under tires

Todd Wolter, associate director of student life at the John Felice Rome Center, recalls one of John Felice’s more harrowing adventures…

During the inaugural year of the John Felice Rome Center, a tour of the Middle East was offered over the winter term break. The tour quickly became a JFRC tradition with stops in Cairo, Tel Aviv, Amman, and Beirut. Yet the first journey remains the most legendary. On a cold January day in 1963, two buses loaded with sleepy JFRC students were winding their way through the Lebanese mountains in the early morning fog and drizzle.

John Felice was riding on the lead bus when it became evident that the second bus was nowhere to be seen. Professor Felice ordered his bus to stop and the JFRC crowd exited and began wandering nervously along the side of the road. Before long the second bus appeared over a ridge and began to slowly inch down the curving road, which had now become covered with a thin sheet of ice. As the bus drew near it began to slide, moving slowly toward the spiraling edge of a cliff.

John Felice’s leadership is legendary and this event marked his courage and his love for his students. In an effort to stop the bus from sliding off the mountainside, John Felice lay down on the pavement in front of the approaching vehicle. God was looking down on John Felice and the JFRC students on that fabled day as the bus managed to grind to a stop only a few feet from John Felice. “I thought, if they die, I might as well go with them,” he later recalled.
Remembering John Felice
Excerpts from those he touched

- a towering figure • a legend • one of the most charming men • an awesome man • one of the most memorable people • could accomplish anything • a one-man electrical storm • his legacy will live on • all-consuming passion • the Maltese Falcon • one of the most giving people • larger than life • never forget

Honor his memory

John Felice dedicated his life to bridging cultures and providing students with the experience of a lifetime. You can follow in his footsteps by giving to the John Felice New Campus Fund or the John P. and Mary K. Felice Scholarship Endowment.

Donations can be made:

BY MAIL
LUC Gift Processing
Attn: JFRC Campus Fund or John P. and Mary K. Felice Scholarship
Department 4336
Carol Stream, IL 60122-4336

ONLINE
alumni.LUC.edu/felicetribute