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Fran Bixby '22

When I started my college journey, I never intended to become an Italian studies minor. I was going to take the two courses that I needed for my GARs and move on. What I didn't anticipate was the spark that grew from those basic language courses. Suddenly, I wanted to know as much as I could about Italy.

My family originates from a small town called Villalba in Sicily. I never knew very much about Italy except for the very few phrases passed down from my grandmother, all of which translated into commands for misbehaving children, and the recipes handed down by my great-grandmother. Through Dr. Daniel Leisawitz and Daniela Viale, I was able to reconnect to my family's past. I am infinitely grateful for the Italian studies minor for allowing me to reclaim Italian, a language that very few members of my family still speak.

That is not to say that my Italian studies remain focused on the past. Through studying the language, I have become a stronger speaker in English as well as Italian, a better cook through the Eatalians/Kitchen Chemistry courses, and a more globally conscious theatre-maker through the Italian Drama course. And looking forward to the future, I could name quite a few opera houses that are looking to hire stage managers who can read Italian.

I also must take a moment to reflect on my grandfather, Charles Shrader, who was so excited to hear that I was taking Italian courses that he gave me all of his old Italian textbooks and learning flashcards. After he passed, my grandmother gave me a street sign that he had taken when he was stationed in Italy, "*Chiuso per turno*" or "No turning." This sign has hung on my dorm door all year and has reminded me to keep pushing forward. He would be so thrilled and honored, as I

am, to know that his granddaughter became an Italian studies minor and that she was presented with this prestigious award.

I will always be grateful for Dr. Leisawitz and Daniela. And I will always be grateful for my time in Italian studies. *Grazie mille* to Dr. Leisawitz, Daniela Viale, the anonymous donor of this award, and my loud Italian family for showing me my roots and supporting me on this endeavor of growth.