

Corporate executive ditches his suit and moves to Italy to become a writer? For Mark Gordon Smith, it's not just a fairy tale...



Corporate businessman-turned-travel writer, Mark Gordon Smith, will swing through Beaufort on Saturday, December 20th to sign copies of the first two books in his Italian Trilogy, *Tuscan Echoes* & *Tuscan Light*. These beautiful little volumes would make excellent stocking stuffers for the travel buff in your life... or anyone who longs to experience Italy, even if only through language. Smith will be at Bay Street Trading Co. in downtown Beaufort from 1-3 pm. For more information, call 24-2000.

What made you leave the corporate world to write a book? How did Italy influence your decision?

I left the corporate world after two companies I worked for went bankrupt. The experience led me to believe that the time had come to pursue a dream that I have had all of my adult life—to write. The timing seemed appropriate as well. A move was in the works and that move would take me to a new city with no corporate connections, somewhere I could have a place to reflect and create.

Italy's influence on my decision goes back many years. My mother was a writer, never published, and I discovered a file of her work that inspired me to create a book that she never had the opportunity to write. She died of complications from cancer when I was 19, hence the dedication in the book. For all the hope that I hold for other readers to enjoy this work, the most rewarding part has been completing this dream of my mother's.

How did your journey affect your writing?

As I began to write, every day, in and around Florence, the book began to take shape. The day to day, quiet, out-of-the-way experience of seeing a city as a semi-resident, a "semi-Florentino" as the Italian's say, gave me permission to enjoy sights, sounds, and events few tourists have the time to experience. A lot of my experiences in travel to Italy over the last four decades influenced the work as well. However the key influence on my writing was the time that the season in Italy gave to me.

When did you first see Italy? What made you want to return?

Our family lived in Italy when I was six to eight years old. My earliest memories of Italy are of Florence and the Italian people. That greatly influenced me. My desire to return was motivated by both a fundamental and abiding love of Italy and Italians, as well as a reality of international travel – no one knows where you are! The ability to escape the phone, computer, email, fax, travel, cell phone routine always disappears when I'm there, and that is a great motivator as well. Silence gives me permission to create.

What were the some of the cultural differences you noticed? What was the most unexpected difference?

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