

Memoir of Louis F. Scaramella, an Italian genius in Chicago

In 1971 in the *Archivio Italiano di Otologia*, a first original study was published entitled “L’Anastomosi tra i due Nervi Faciali”. This article was followed by a second in 1973 and by a third (in the same journal) in 1975. These contributions were signed by Louis Scaramella: he continued to persevere with his research on the same topic, publishing again in 1984 and 1996.

The method of *cross-face* “the restoration of the nervous stimulation of the paralytic muscle with the insertion of a new tract”, consisted of the union of one or more branches of the healthy nerve with several remainders from the damaged side.

Scaramella had chosen the submandibular path “reinforcing the energetic source with the anastomosis between the cervical loop of the hypoglossal nerve and the distal extremity of the cervical-facial-paralytic trunk”. The distances between the stumps were filled by means of grafts obtained from one or two sural nerves.

I visited this pioneer of VII pair surgery many times, in his house in Frankfort, a town next to a huge golf course, a few kilometers from the famous city on Lake Michigan.

His friends were all important figures in American otorhinolaryngology: I am referring to names like Buckingham, Soboroff, Valvassori, Lederer, Holinger, only to mention those who had created the atlas of otorhinolaryngology and broncoesophagology, edited in Italy by Giovanni Rossi in 1970 for Minerva Medica.

Furthermore, in one of his thoughtful moments he wanted my photograph to be inserted next to Sambaugh’s.

During one of my visits to Chicago he had asked me to give a lecture to the assistants at Hines Hospital. “I sent you a beautiful book in English on Tuscany, written by Ferenk Matè” he had told me at the beginning of December 2010. Several weeks had gone by without any reliable news and Louis had passed away unexpectedly without me being able to tell him that his gift had successfully arrived in my mail box on February 1st. He was very keen to be assured of this. He and Nina, his wife, with his children and grandchildren had always spent several days in Florence or Fiesole, places they adored no less than their favorite S. Lucido. I’ll never forget Louis Scaramella.

In the auditorium of the Hollywood Beach hotel, the lights were out and the chairman of the American Triological Society had called upon me to address the meeting.

I was about to begin, in that long ago April of 1970, my lecture on facial skeletal traumas.

Joseph Goldman, the president, had wished me good luck, when, in the silence of the crowded auditorium, I heard a sinister ticking, coming from a rear room where the slide pro-

jectors were kept. Can you imagine? My colour slides, so perfectly arranged in their respective slots, stressed from my zest in creating opportune explanations in English, had mysteriously ended up on the floor, in the dark.

The presentation was interrupted and I ran to remedy the situation especially as the sequence had been totally changed. A tragedy! As I tried to reach the area of the disaster in order to pick up my grey squares, a friendly voice in Italian whispered in my ear “Don’t worry - he said to me – I’ll take care of it. I’ll put everything back in place and shortly, you’ll be able to make your presentation”. Louis, for the first time, had appeared with that precious and unforgettable gesture of friendship and patience.

He had wanted to show me his generous and loyal nature; this man, who was one of the fundamental figures of the medical profession in his city, already then, one of the great names in American audiology surgery, defined today by the journalist Victoria Johnson, an *Italian-born old school doctor*.

His medical culture did not impede him from always being available, willing and humane.

For what I can say, his faith in God had the strength of steel. For long months, he withstood his physical ailments, that would eventually cause his death, without the minimum sign of anxiety. Always with a smile, he expressed a true love for his native country, Italy, for that Calabrian town that he had wanted to immortalize in his vivacious and realistic diary. He had hoped that in that small town, traces of his eternity would be shared with those left in Chicago.

An epigraph, by wish of his daughters, will be permanently on view in memory of his home town.



Valerio Micheli-Pellegrini

Selected references

- Scaramella LF. *L’anastomosi tra i due nervi faciali*. Arch Ital Otol 1971;82:209-16.
- Scaramella LF. *Facial nerve anastomosis*. Laryngoscope 1973;83:1834-40.
- Scaramella LF. *Anastomosis between the two facial nerves*. Laryngoscope 1975;85:1359-66.
- Scaramella LF. *Traumatic facial paralysis*. Acta Otorhinolaryngol Ital 1984;4:549-65.
- Scaramella LF. *Cross-facial nerve anastomosis: historical note*. Ear, Nose, Throat J 1996;75:343-54.

Memoir of Oreste Mosciaro

Oreste Mosciaro departed this life quietly, after a long period of suffered disability lasting seven years. He studied under Professor Bocca. He had a rapid and brilliant professional career. After graduating at the University of Bologna in 1959 and specializing in otolaryngology at the University of Milan graduating in 1962, he became an assistant to the ENT Chair at the University of Sassari from 1962 to 1964, Ferrara from 1965 to 1967, then head physician in Faenza in 1969 and later in Verona in 1973. In this period he developed his professional competence, an excellent diagnostician and very able surgeon in all sectors of our specialization. He was the first of us, as young assistants, to do a stapedectomy with interposition, having as a teacher, besides Professor Bocca, Dr. Luis Garcia Ibanez (the father of José Luis and Emilio). But his preference was for oncological surgery of the head and neck, where he knew how to combine solid professional knowledge with a natural manual skill. During his years in Verona Luis Garcia Ibanez, son of Emilio, was his best student, who he taught with excellent results all our “non-otological” surgery.

Oreste’s mother came from Lombardy and his father from Calabria, and he combined the best of both. Our collaboration, starting in the years of specialization, was a daily occurrence in Sassari and Ferrara for seven long years. We like to remember the young Mosciaro, together with us in the sixties in the Sardinian “adventure”. In those days to reach that beautiful island, still to become a tourist paradise, cars were hoisted on board with nets to be unloaded the following day in Porto Torres. At the time, especially in Sassari, it was a pioneering period, both professionally and organizationally. The need was for qualified, but humane, professionals to make life together amiable

and to take on the daily challenges to create and develop for that period a modern university clinic, in a Sardinia still very poor which, nevertheless, offered magnificent tourist attractions even for those, like us, on low salaries that allowed little extras. We like to remember “Uncle Oreste” who played with our children on his knees, together with our and his very good friend, the equally young and brilliant José Luis Garcia Ibanez Ferrandiz, who, sent by his father for a short apprenticeship at Professor Bocca’s clinic, returned to Spain only four years later. And Oreste in Ferrara with his young wife Margherita and their daughters, who immediately became a part of our families. With them we shared expectations, dreams, disappointments and distress. We cannot forget Oreste’s jovial character, his sense of humour, caustic wit, dandy like elegance, his human touch, availability and generosity to all-comers, the importance given to friendship and capacity to bear the difficulties in life. We have lost more a brother than just a friend. The message that Oreste Mosciaro leaves us, that mitigates in part the sorrow, is that one can consider a life worthwhile when compassion, intelligence and duty guide our daily tasks.



Oreste Pignataro, Antonio Antonelli