



Remembering John Marchi: A One of a Kind, to be sure!

Anthony Julian Tamburri (May 01, 2009)



New York State Senator Giovanni (John) Marchi died at the age of 87, on Saturday April 25, less than a month shy of his 88th birthday while on a family trip in Italy.

Senator Marchi represented New York's 24th Senate District for 50 years, from 1956 to 2006. Wide-ranging, genteel, regardful, and observant, Marchi was a rare elected official, a throw-back, to some degree, to the politician of old, whose concern was surely first and foremost for his constituency.

As an elected official, John Marchi was very much dedicated to preserving Staten Island's cultural institutions, assisting, for one, in the development of CUNY's College of Staten Island, and sponsoring, in turn, the Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Both institutions today figure as important



landmarks for the borough of Staten Island. He was also instrumental in co-drafting legislation that helped save bankrupt New York City in the mid-1970s.

In addition, Marchi was genuinely concerned for his brethren's well being. In 1996 he managed to get the Fresh Kills landfill closed, at that time the world's largest garbage dump. In his concern for NYC's college students, he sponsored a law to make it easier for CUNY students to receive public assistance, thus making it possible for the first-generation, working-class student to attend university.

He was indeed a rare breed of a politician; Marcus Aurelius, Ovid, Aristotle, and the Bible were often reference points both in his private and public life. In citing them as well in his legislative discussions and speeches, he ultimately sent his colleagues and members of the press back to their high school and college textbooks. Marchi was also an elected official who strove for ideological consistency: as he opposed abortion, according to his Catholic beliefs, he also opposed capital punishment, thus finding that philosophical balance in his quotidian beliefs.

A truly passionate elected official who served his district for so long a period, Senator Marchi was equally dedicated to his Italian and Italian/American culture. In addition to his love for the Classics, he would also dedicate his off time to the study and translation of Italian texts and manuscripts. He also challenged those, such as the infamous Joe Colombo, who used their Italian ethnicity for dubious reasons, in this case often receiving death threats. Italy and all of its glory were for him of primary importance. It is thus indeed poignant that he spent his last days with his family in his parents' home town of Lucca.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his family, especially his daughter Joan Migliori, our friend and colleague at the Calandra Institute, who serves in the capacity of Assistant Director of Community and International Programs.

Anthony Julian Tamburri
Dean, Calandra Institute

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