

A Brief History of Francesco Bodoira (1894-1969)

And, [The Music Collection Donated to Appalachian State University in his name](#) – March, 2013

Francesco Bodoira (Frank Bodo in the USA) fought in World War 1 for the Italian Army. In World War I, the Italians were part of the Allied Forces of England, France, the USA, and others.

In the U.S., we Italian/American Bodoiras are known by the last name of Bodo. This came about at the end of the 19th century, when foremen at the coal mines would ask how to spell the name. After the first four letters (B-o-d-o) they would say, "That's enough."



Francesco was born in San Maurizio Canavese, Italy and as an infant immigrated to Colorado in the USA, where his father and two older half-brothers (Michael and Louis) worked the coal mines Francesco's father returned to Italy In 1905 and Francesco went with him. His two brothers stayed in the USA.

When Francesco's half-brother, Louis, returned to Italy in 1910 to get a bride to take back to America, Francesco came back to the USA with him. On returning, he and his two half-brothers, (he playing music on the weekends and his brothers working the mines) scraped up enough money to purchase what became the 9 square mile Ridges Basin Ranch operation by the 1940s.

The Ridges Basin Property was donated to the Laplata Conservancy and is now mostly a reservoir.

<https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/animas/pdfs/RidgesBasinCRMP.pdf>

In 1913, Francesco returned to Italy to arrange he had been born in Italy, and World War I was into the Army. Once inducted, his six foot qualified him to be placed into the prestigious he also played music for the Grenadiers Band. acquired a large collection of various published compositions.



his father's funeral. Since starting, he was inducted height and powerful build Grenadiers division, where While in the Grenadiers he and unpublished musical

Following is a link to the Italian Army Regiments as of May 1915: <http://www.314th.org/Nafziger-Collection-of-Orders-of-Battle/915IEAA.pdf> **Note the one and only Grenadier Regiment on Page 7**

Some scenes of the Italian Grenadiers in the field and on the front in 1916.

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L'ILLUSTRATION

28 Octobre 1916



Autel commémoratif, portant ce texte : « ... Et celui-là ressuscité, victorieux, qui tombe pour la patrie dans la sainte clarté des armes », et les noms des lieux où succombèrent les grenadiers du fameux régiment créé en 1659.



Au cours de la cérémonie, les soldats défilent devant le duc d'Aoste.



Parmi une décoration de mâts triomphaux et d'urnes où brûlent les parfums, qui évoque une glorieuse antiquité, les troupes, rassemblées et formées en carré, assistent à la messe.

SUR LE FRONT ITALIEN : CÉRÉMONIE A LA MÉMOIRE DES GRENADIERS



The tent that Francesco called home in WW1 looked a bit more like a Tepee. Many years later, in the late 1940s and early 50s, son Roger and friends used to camp out in this tent.

Fairly early in the war, Francesco was taken prisoner and placed on a work farm in Czechoslovakia for three years. In Czechoslovakia he also played music, possibly to entertain his captors, and among his collection of sheet music, there were also Czech compositions. When the war ended, he returned to San Maurizio and then back to the USA. UPDATE: . SIGMUNDSHERBERG, AUSTRIA is where he was officially interred according to the Red Cross letter to his mother, Caterina, dated September 5, 1916. As noted elsewhere he had a dream they would be captured, and he told his trench mates to say they were farmers. That way they would be able to eat. Following is a history with many pictures of the Sigmundsherberg Camp and cemetery where over 2600 Italian soldiers were buried.

https://ww1sites.eu/index.php?id=35&tx_wwicaheritage_caheritage%5BcaHeritage%5D=144&tx_wwicaheritage_caheritage%5Baction%5D=show&tx_wwicaheritage_caheritage%5Bcontroller%5D=CaHeritage&cHash=dd9ff4ba6e88c9465c7f154f0d4a3bf9

The Camp History

https://www.google.com/search?source=univ&tbm=isch&q=sigmundsherberg+history&client=opera&fir=XPHkjcks6GOYMM%252Cy4IsT68ZK_piLM%252C_%253B7zmeWO9ianr1eM%252Cp6YEjX4dGjzGCM%252C_%253B1Qu99hRk5k2b1M%252CNhgmjRU7yOTP6M%252C_%253Bvd5ZArKetXqWOM%252CkVc_f-F-ZJaPVEM%252C_%253BJtiWfWFCf-SvAM%252CR8BBvJmy-QFnzM%252C_%253B9oL3XHv0mPLj2M%252CPW76j1xlcLOUM%252C_%253BNP67hCWchZm2fM%252CjNa3ETWds71E5M%252C_%253BwLcDPOhua-3fDM%252CUXBbcRmTDykduM%252C_%253BrMjNeqpTcp-4fM%252CBg6_lp8sAYAmgM%252C_%253BZlicFwCW2adHRM%252CgcT55J-ioYtHCM%252C_&usg=AI4_-kR2kuLwR2vwktmFUfCn9ihyXNJDdg&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjVqp3v7-_7AhWldN8KHQKHBMUQ7Al6BAgREDY&biw=742&bih=347&dpr=2.5#imgrc=v77Ef_w_VUjTtM&imgdii=03mU0bamsMZAyM

Part II: More on WW1 and the Italian Grenadiers

Supposedly to be a Grenadier you needed to be at least 6 foot tall. Italians aren't, in general, tall. Francesco Bodoira was 5'11.5 so he squeezed in. Here is a short piece on the talented men in the Italian Army

ITALIAN GRENADIERS.

A DASHING CHARGE.

ROME, Wednesday! — During an attack on heights to the north of Austria, a regiment of Grenadiers, the tallest men in the' army, under Major Manfredi, approached to within 50 yards of the enemy's trenches and ' then charged with fixed bayonets, crying "Savoia!" The Austrian's 'broke and fled. Shrapnel forced the Grenadiers to seek shelter, and the enemy re-advanced and attempted to re-take the trenches. Major Manfredi, who was of great stature, seized the flag and shouted, "Grenadiers, remember the Sardinian Brigade never retreated." The Grenadiers thou flung themselves wildly on the Austrians, and exterminated them. A shell carried away Major Manfredi's leg, and he died from loss of blood.

The 1st Grenadiers Regiment was founded as Regiment of the Guards (Italian: Reggimento delle Guardie) on 18 April 1659 by the Duke of Savoy Charles Emmanuel II as his personal bodyguard regiment during military campaigns.

Granatieri - Grenadiers



The grenadiers are the oldest specialties of infantry Weapon. Grenadier units are concentrated in Lazio and in particular functions of representation in the capital. There is currently only the 1° reggimento "Grenadiers of Sardinia" of two battalions, and its flag is decorated with the Knight's cross 1.M.I., 2 gold medals, 3 silver medals and 1 bronze medals for military valour and 1 silver medal of merit.

The specialty of the grenadiers, descends from the old guards Regiment created in 1659 by Duke Carlo Emanuele II who in 1664 order is given precedence over the other regiments and infantry as the first increment of the Ordinance. Grenadiers were foot soldiers, armed with a Sword, Firelock, Bayonet, and a Pouch to hold his Grenades. These early grenades were small shells, concave Globes, or hollow Balls, some made of Iron, some of Tin, others of Wood, and even of Pastboard; but most commonly of Iron, because the Splinters of it do

most Execution. This Globe is filled with fine Powder, and into the Touchhole of it is stuck a fuse of Powder, beaten, and tempered with Charcoal Dust, that it may not flash, but burn gently until it comes to the Charge. These are thrown by Hand, landing places where Men stand thick, and particularly into trenches and lodgments the Enemy makes, and do great Mischief.

Grenadiers were first instituted in France in 1667, by having 4 or 5 to each company; but in the year 1670, they were formed into companies, and in 1685, were first known in the British service. The Grenadiers were clothed differently from the rest of the Battalion and wore high Caps. Each Regiment, of late Years, had a Company of Grenadiers, which always took the Right of the Battalion. The Grenadiers were generally the tallest and briskest fellows, and always the first upon attacks. When there was any appearance of action, each Grenadier carried three Hand Grenades. Horse Grenadiers, called by the French Grenadiers Volans, or Flying Grenadiers, were such as are mounted on horseback, and fight on Foot; their exercise is the same with the other Grenadiers.

Dissolved in 1798 and reconstituted in 1814, it combines its history to that of the current Brigade "Grenadiers of Sardinia". There were later formed other units such as the grenadier Brigade "Lombardia" Grenadiers (3° e 4° Regiment), the "Grenadier Brigade of Naples" (5° and 6° Regiment), Brigade "Grenadiers di Toscana" (7° and 8° Regiment), became respectively the brigades "Lombardia" (73° and 74° reggimento), "Napoli" (75° and 76° Regiment) and "Tuscany" (77° and 78°). Most recently, the brigade "Grenadiers of Sardinia" had regiments 10° and 11°.

The military annals of the House of Savoy are full of achievements in which the valor and genius of its illustrious chiefs add fresh brilliancy to the pages of Italian history. The battle of Solferino (24 June 1859) was the decisive battle of the first phase of the Second War of Italian Unification and was a hard-fought French and Piedmontese victory that defeated an Austrian counterattack. Reinforcements were sent by the King and consisted of three battalions of the 2nd regiment of Savoy, and one of the 1st, supported by the Lancers of Alessandria, by two battalions of Grenadiers, and by the 11th battery. The position of Madonna della Scoperta was retaken after two brilliant assaults. It was on that occasion that the Italian Grenadiers, in whose ranks were to be found the greater number of Lombard and Venetian volunteers, belonging to the most illustrious patrician families and to the well-to-do classes, found themselves engaged at close quarters, and after a while discovered that even their bayonets were disabled. They consequently reversed their muskets and made their way through the Austrian columns by a vigorous use of the butt-ends.

The Italian army, according to the organization of 1865, had 8 regiments of grenadiers of the line, 72 regiments of infantry of the line, and five regiments of bersaglieri (rifles). A regiment of grenadiers, or of infantry of the line, had 4 battalions; each battalion 4 companies; a company, 4 officers and 149 men. Together, the 80 regiments of grenadiers and infantry of the line had 202,720 combatants.

The Italian army of 1890 consisted of 80 regiments of the line, 10 of bersaglieri (riflemen), 20 regiments of cavalry, 10 of artillery, and 2 of engineers. A regiment of the line consisted of 3 battalions of 4 companies each and numbered about 1500 men on peace and 3000 men on war footing. Eight of the regiments were grenadiers. The bersaglieri were formed in regiments of four battalions each, and were picked troops, armed with a shorter rifle, and especially trained to traverse long distance at a run.

An extensive reorganization of the Italian army was undertaken early in the 20th century. At that time only seven Alpine regiments were stationed in the Alpine valleys, two regiments of grenadiers stationed in Rome, 94 regiments of infantry of the line scattered throughout the kingdom. There were 12 regiments of sharpshooters, a special infantry with purely Italian characteristics; their record is world-wide; in them live the traditions of the Crimean War, and it is to the credit of General Lamarmora that he gave to Italy such a noble contingent. And as for its sturdy soldiers, speeding like arrows, their plumes flying in the wind, they pass in review before the people, who feel that their hearts beat in union with their strong defenders. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/it-esercito-granatieri.htm>

WW1: Above and following are from a Full History and Commentary https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Granatieri_di_Sardegna_Mechanized_Brigade

NOTE: This site has links from and to [Articles incorporating text from Wikipedia](#), [Italian Army Brigades](#), [Military history of Italy](#), [Grenadier regiments](#)

World War I

At the outbreak of World War, I the brigade moved to the Italian-Austrian border and after Italy's declaration of war on 23 May 1915 the brigade participated in the conquest of Monfalcone on the Adriatic coast. Afterwards the brigade participated in the first four Battles of the Isonzo aimed at conquering the city of Gorizia. The brigade tried to capture the Sabotin hill near Gorizia and later fought at Oslavia. After the brigade had again fought at Oslavia in the Fifth Battle of the Isonzo it was transferred to the Asiago plateau to reinforce the Italian forces there, which were breaking under the massive Austrian-Hungarian Asiago offensive.

There the brigade defended Mount Cenigo- the last position between the Austrians and the Italian plains. A loss of the mountain would have let to the encirclement of the Italian Armies along the Isonzo front. On Mount Cenigo the Granatieri di Sardegna stubbornly held the position even after ammunition had been expended and the enemy had broken into the brigades line. Ultimately the defense of Mount Cenigo ensured that the Austrians had to abandon the offensive.

After the Austrian offensive had been defeated the brigade returned to the Isonzo front and participated in the sixth, seventh, and eighth Battle of the Isonzo. During 1917 the brigade continued to fight along the Isonzo river. After the Italian retreat after the defeat in the Battle of Caporetto the brigade had to be rebuilt. In 1918 the brigade fought in the last two big battles on the Italian front - the Battle of the Piave River and the Battle of Vittorio Veneto.

After the war the brigade was garrisoned in Rome, where a third Grenadier Regiment was raised. The brigade and its three regiments came under the 21st Infantry Division on 1 December 1926. On that date the brigade was renamed as XXI Infantry Brigade, while the three grenadier regiments became the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Granatieri di Sardegna Regiment.

NOTE: Sardinia (Italian: Sardegna, Sardinian: Sardigna) is the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is an autonomous region of Italy. It was formerly the Kingdom of Sardinia. The official name is, in Italian, Regione Autonoma della Sardegna.

The Grenadier Marching Band March «The Grenadier's return» (Grenadiers' Slow March) - Band of the Grenadier Guards

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ForZFaH_u1M

<https://www.youtube.com/@LaBandaMilitare>

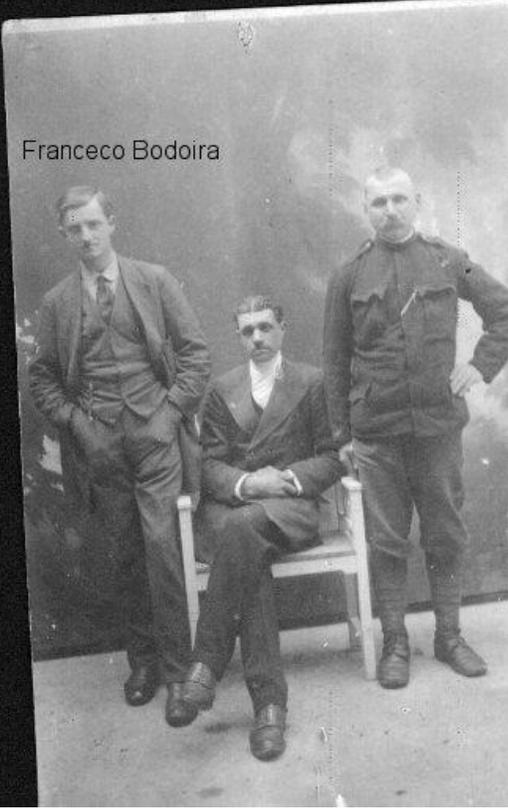
These may be recordings by the band leader when Frank Bodoira was involved:

<https://www.discogs.com/release/7435486-Italian-Grenadiers-Band-Grenadiers-Of-Sardinia-Hymn-Of-Mameli>

<https://www.discogs.com/release/16667787-Italian-Grenadiers-Band-Royal-March-Of-Italy-Viva-La-Francia>



Frank (Francesco Bodoira) Bodo Formal Poses



Frank (Francesco Bodoira) Bodo in the Field WW1



Some of Francesco's tales told to son Roger were the following:

- Francesco said that they had little to eat and dug any roots out of the devastated ground they could find and ate them. One evening he saw a cow nearby and slipped out of the trench thinking to milk it. Bad plan. It turned out to be a bull.
- In another instance, he left the trench to answer nature's call and while he was out, a mortar shell hit the trench. When he returned to his spot, he found the mortar had where his mates were and where he would have been. Several were killed.
- In another story, he said he was assigned by his commander to sneak up to a rail station and get water and commandeer whatever supplies he could. He had to forge a river to crawl along the banks to hide from the enemy. When he got there all he could get was a pail of water and very few supplies. As he was leaving, a mortar hit, and the private parts of a body landed in the water pail.
- There was a mountain assault where soldiers were skewered by barbed wire sheets that would pop up and entrap them as they rushed the enemy encampment above. Trapped, the Austrian gunners could mow them down.
- Once, the commander of the regiment asked if anyone in the troop could assist a local priest in serving mass. My dad volunteered, saying that as a young acolyte he learned to say mass forwards and backwards. Further he had a good chanting voice. The Commander gave him the assignment which was a break to the rear. Entering the church, he happened to see the priest taking liberties with a nun. When he left to return to the front line, the nun, who knew he saw them, gave him a huge pack of food and wine to take on his journey back as a sealed lips bribe.
- As mentioned earlier, Francesco had a dream one night that the next morning they would be captured. He told his fellow soldiers about the dream and told them, "If we are indeed captured, tell them you are farmers in civilian life." The reasoning was that they would then be interred in a work farm. After original processing in Sigmundsherberg they were force-marched to a work farm and having eaten nothing over a few days, when they were given soup their stomachs were so empty at first they couldn't hold it down.
- During his interment in the work farm, Francesco struck up a friendship with the two daughters of the Jewish farm manager who worked in what was like a camp store where supplies could be received from prisoner's families and other items could be purchased. In that camp and the store, Cigarettes were like money. As a result, he managed to have cigarettes sent in disguised bundles from his hometown. Also, having cultivated a friendship with the two daughters, Francesco obtained some special favors. He maintained that friendship with the one surviving daughter until his death in 1969. The rest of the daughter's family was exterminated by Hitler in WW2.
- Another story Francesco recounted was how in order to receive what was allowed to be sent to you, you had to receive it in parts. Thus, if you needed shoes, you asked the family to send one shoe at a time.

Francesco told a story about how, before his capture, he had lent his jacket to another soldier. That soldier was killed, and Francesco's mother was told he had died. Later, after his capture, the Red Cross sent letter to his mother that explained he was alive and a prisoner in good health in the Sigmundsherberg Camp.

(MOD. N. 1 - UFFICIO COMUNICAZIONI)



Roma, li 5 SET 1916 191

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA

COMMISSIONE DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA

ROMA - Piazza Montecitorio, 115 - ROMA

Num. 5167

*Bodaira Caterina
S. Maurizio Casalese
/ Torino /*

In risposta alla richiesta della S. V.
del // ci preghiamo informare che dalle
liste ufficiali trasmesseci dalle Autorità Austria-
che il: *Soldo Bodaira Francesco Lu.
Francesco del 1° Reg. 11^a Classe 94.*
~~Non~~ risulta prigioniero di guerra *internato*
a Sigmundsherberg
in buona salute

Qualora in seguito pervenissero a questa Com-
missione notizie al riguardo del suddetto militare,
sarà doverosa cura comunicarle immediatamente al-
l'indirizzo dato, senza che la S. V. abbia a fare
nuove sollecitazioni.

Con la massima osservanza.

CROCE ROSSA ITALIANA
COMMISSIONE DEI PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA

La Presidenza

HOMECOMING

Upon release from internment, Francesco was on a train to Torino where he would be officially mustered out with his fellow troops. However, he jumped off the train as it passed his hometown of San Maurizio. The word must not have made it around SanMaurizio that he wasn't dead, because when he first got off the train and walked down the street, some people thought he was a ghost..

Francesco's honorable discharge, September 1919. Soon after he would return to the USA.

N. 34 del Catal. (R. 1915).

Categoria 1^a (12)
Classe 18 94
Anno di nascita 1894

Corpo cui fu trasferito all'atto del congedamento (4) *deposito Granatieri Roma*

REGGIMENTO GRANATIERI

F **FOGLIO DI CONGEDO ILLIMITATO**

per (5) *fine di ferma*

che si rilascia a *Granatiere*
Podopia Francesco
No° di matricola *60115 (41)* il quale prende domicilio nel Comune di *S. Maurizio Canavese*
Mandamento di *Perico* Distretto militare di *Cortina*

(6) **Durante il tempo passato sotto le armi ha tenuto condotta ed ha servito con fedeltà ed onore**

A **ROMA** addì **13 SET 1919**

Firma del Titolare (9) *Podopia Francesco* Il Comandante del Corpo *Signariz Jago*

Comune di *Supavasio*

Pagato il " Premio Congedamento " Visto, addì *13 SET 1919*
n. *250* IL CAPITANO *M...* Il Sindaco *...*

13 SET 1919

In 1920 Francesco returned to the USA.



▲ Frank Bodo of Bodo Motor Sales, Inc., Detroit dealer, is shown presenting the keys of a Rambler All-Weather Convertible Sedan to Miss Betty Havens, the third member of her family to purchase a Nash from Mr. Bodo within two days. Miss Haven's father became the owner of a Statesman and her sister took delivery of a Nash Rambler Suburban.

On working his way back to return to his brothers' ranch in Durango Colorado, he went to Detroit to work for Ford who was paying the unheard-of wage of \$5 a day. By chance, while in Detroit, he ended up buying a used car lot in 1927.

He became successful and became a Nash and Rambler automobile dealer until his death in 1969.

In the USA Francesco also continued his musical pursuits in the 1920s and 30s as a member of the Elks Club, playing Clarinet, Flute and Piccolo in the Elks Band. The band toured to various state and national conventions, such as this one posed in front of Soldiers Field in Chicago.



This brief commentary includes all I and others in the family came to know about the 1894 to 1920 years. Perhaps a few more stories will come to mind, but all-in-all this seems quite remarkable and a good start for anyone interested in World War 1 and military music, especially Italian Military music.

Note: This document was researched and written by Roger Bodo with contributions from Anne Marie Champagne (NEE Bodo) his daughter and Victoria Baldassarro (NEE Bodo), his sister.