

When the students of Origini 7 left MIB School of Management after four exciting months living and studying in Trieste while exploring their ancestral homeland of Friuli Venezia-Giulia, they pledged to meet again.

“South America ’09!” was the hopeful cry as the new friends boarded their respective airplanes, bound for new adventures.

Yet while the young entrepreneurs were filled with the spirit of Origini – a course that did much more than impart lessons of international business – the logistics of reuniting 15 people from seven countries were daunting. It would take a healthy dose of Italian flexibility to bring the group together again.

This April, with a lot of effort and a little luck, South America ’09 became a reality. Almost 18 months since their final goodbye, 11 of the 15 Origini members gathered in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The students arranged this meeting themselves, without any involvement from their alma mater. This spontaneous gathering came from the heart.

Origini is a program designed to foster business ties between companies in Friuli Venezia-Giulia and expatriate Furlan communities around the world. In 2007, students from South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, the United States and Canada studied commerce and international trade at MIB before completing a six week internship with a company in the region.

The program – supported by the regional government and emigrants’ associations such as Ente Friuli nel Mondo and ALEF – covered more than business, however. The students visited the towns where their families had emigrated from, forging a connection with their past. They ate, drank, spoke and lived the culture of the region, developing an Italian sensibility – and an appreciation for the European lifestyle – that most students would admit has stayed with them ever since.

This year group members flew to Argentina from Italy, Canada, England, and Brazil, with others arriving by boat from neighbouring Uruguay. Work commitments kept four members of the original group from attending, but they were there in spirit.

During their weekend together, the students discussed their career progress and their involvement in their local emigrants’ societies.

Mostly, though, the group marveled that they were together again, a little older and better traveled, but filled with the same spirit of camaraderie and excitement that made the program so memorable in the first place.

Origini 7 was a special group, said program director and MIB professor Stefano Pilotto.

“Beyond the sciences and the cultures, beyond the languages and the experiences, there is an amazing power coming from the heart, which means friendship forever across any time and any trend. That is Origini 7!” he said recently at his MIB office.

Prof. Pilotto, who every year dedicates himself to sharing the economic and cultural riches of Friuli Venezia-Giulia with young Furlans from around the world, was very moved that this group of former students so loved the Origini experience that they went to such lengths to recreate it on another continent.

His students didn't forget him, either. During the midnight *asado* (an Argentinean barbeque), the group called the professor at his home in Trieste, waking him in the early hours of the morning with a robust cheer. As the phone was passed from student to student, Prof. Pilotto's voice filled with emotion.

"You have given me a wonderful gift. I am moved and I wish to be there with you guys," he said.

Mark Pozzobon, an Origini member from Melbourne, Australia, flew to Argentina from London, where he lives with fellow Origini alumnus Glenda Puntel, originally from Buenos Aires. The couple met in Trieste and has been together ever since the program ended.

"It was as though not a day had gone by," said Mark about having the group together again, a sentiment shared by all members of Origini. He marveled that they were able to pull off their plan.

"We always had the hope, but I think the fact that it became reality is still a bit surreal. But we always knew that if there was a slight possibility it could happen, it was going to happen," he said.

Rita Fratta came to Argentina from Montevideo, Uruguay, with her husband, Conrado, and their four-month-old son, Santino, whom the group lovingly dubbed "the Origini baby." Rita was thrilled that her family could meet the friends she talked so much about.

"Origini left me with an extraordinary new feeling. Now I feel I have a new family, a new group of friends that will last forever," she said.

"We created something in Italy, a feeling between us, which inspired us to come from different corners of the world to be together. We have something in common, our origin, which makes us feel like a family. It was very important to me to go to the reunion with Conrado and Santino, because I wanted them to know how important my Origini family is to me."

At most dinners or gatherings during the course, it was customary for each student to stand and say a few words about what the occasion or experience meant to them. In Argentina, the students did not continue this formality. They didn't have to. Their being there spoke for itself.

The group did not dispense with every Origini tradition, however. They shared stories, told jokes, sang Furlan and Triestina folk songs – including the famous Origini Song – and ended the South American meal with a taste of that Italian staple, chilled lemoncello.

The good fortune that brought these diverse individuals together in Trieste and ignited a shared passion for their ancestral home also made this reunion

possible. With the Origini spirit alive in their hearts, who knows what these young professionals might accomplish in the future?

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