GINO FANNO

by

Maurice W. Downey

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GINO FANNO

(1882-1962)

Mechanical Engineer ETH
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More personal facts

Since the publication of two previous articles in this journal on the subject,¹ I have been able to acquire further information relating to the life and activity of Gino Fanno.

The aim of the present biographical sketch is to present Fanno in a personal rather than a professional light, and I hope that interested readers may be able to form a more complete picture of him as a man, as opposed to an engineer.

Fanno's origins

Gino Girolamo Fanno was born at 2.15 p.m. on Saturday, 18 November 1882 in via Cavour 42, Conegliano (Province of Treviso), Italy. His father, Giacomo Fanno, reported his birth to the local municipal authorities at 11.15 a.m. on Monday, 20 November 1882. The communal secretary, Giovanni Andrea Angeli, accepted Giacomo Fanno's declaration, and exempted him from presenting the child in person, "because of the cold season."²

His parents, both of Jewish faith, were Giacomo Fanno, a wholesale grocery dealer, born in Conegliano on 28 May 1842, and Ester Emma (née Diena), born in Venice on 30 December 1854. They were married on 1 April 1874.

Gino Fanno had an elder sister, Anna, born in Conegliano on 25 April 1875, and an elder brother, Marco Adriano, born in via Sant'Antonio 42, Conegliano on 8 August 1878.

The part of Conegliano where the family lived was mostly inhabited by Jewish residents, and its buildings were to a greater part destroyed during the Austrian-Italian conflict of 1915-1918. This Hebrew quarter of Conegliano, which was called in the town Ghetto della Contrada del Rujo, had been subject to municipal legislation since the middle of the 17th century.

Fanno's primary and secondary education

I am not certain which elementary school Fanno attended, but I assume it must have been the convent school San Francesco in Conegliano, since it was the only school in existence in 1888 when Fanno would have been expected to start school.³ When he was older, Fanno showed a certain
technical ability, and used to build models in wire and metal. On 2 October 1896 his sister Anna married Vittorio Vital.

Gino Fanno was enrolled in the Istituto tecnico statale commerciale Paolo Sarpi, a technical institute in Venice, on 15 October 1896. It was recorded that, at the time of his enrolment, Fanno was resident in the Collegio Ravà in Venice, and that he possessed a technical certificate from Conegliano.

In the Istituto Paolo Sarpi, he neither won any prizes, nor was he punished for any misdemeanours during the course of his studies. He left the physical-mathematical department of the institute on 18 June 1900 and was awarded his certificate as a licentiate of the institute on 24 July 1900. In his final examination he achieved the following marks (Excellent = 10, Accepted = 6): Italian, 8; English, 7; Mathematics, 9; Physics, 9; Practical chemistry, 9; Drawing, 7.

Fanno's student years in Zurich

Gino Fanno was registered by the civil authorities of the city of Zurich on 14 July 1900. As his address he gave the name of Dr.phil. Gerold Hotz, a teacher, in the Nägelistrasse 12 (this street is on the Zürichberg, not far from the Federal Polytechnic, which is now called the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). The municipal officials recorded his religion as Roman Catholic.

He enrolled as a student at the Federal Polytechnic in October 1900, and as personal documents presented a certificate from the Istituto Paolo Sarpi in Venice, an undefined certificate, a birth certificate, and a document from a certain Dr. J.Keller in Zürich.

In his entrance examination to the Federal Polytechnic, Gino Fanno attained the following marks (Marks in Switzerland: 6 is the highest, 1 is the lowest): Composition, 4½; History of politics and literature, 5½; German language, 3½; French language, 5; Natural science, 3; Mathematics, 5; Descriptive Geometry, 5½; Physics, 3; Chemistry, 4½; Drawing, 4½.

Apart from the compulsory lectures and examinations, Fanno also attended voluntary lectures in: Photography: Italian and French literature and history; Material-technical practical exercises; Scientific work in the Physics Laboratory; Electric waves. He also attended lectures on expeditions in the 19th century to the North Pole.
Gino Fanno graduated officially with the Diploma in mechanical engineering from the Federal Polytechnic on 7 July 1904. He received the following marks from his professors in his final examinations (26 March 1904):

- Differential and integral calculations (Franci), 5\(\frac{1}{4}\);
- Differential equations (Franci), 6;
- Descriptive Geometry (Lacombe), 5;
- Analytical Geometry (Geiser), 5\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Mechanics (Herzog), 5\(\frac{3}{4}\);
- Physics experiments (Weiss), 5\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Physics (Weber), 4\(\frac{3}{4}\);
- Electrotechnical principles, apparatus and measurements (Weber), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Work in the Electrotechnical Laboratory (Weber), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Chemistry (Treadwell), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Mechanical technology (Escher), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Machine drawing (Meyer), 5;
- Theoretical machine construction (Meyer), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Hydraulic motors and pumps (Prášil), 5\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Steam engine construction (Stodola), 4\(\frac{3}{4}\);
- Selected chapters on steam machine construction (Stodola), 6;
- Exercises in the Calorific Department of the Laboratory (Stodola), 5;
- Practical machine construction (several professors), 5;
- Practical hydraulics (Fliegner), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\);
- Theoretical machine study (Fliegner), 4\(\frac{1}{2}\).

Fanno changed his accommodation several times during his studies in Zurich. On 13 July 1902 he went to live with Friedrich Rauch, a tailor, who lived in the Rämistrasse 34 (near the present Kunsthauz). On 29 April 1903 he rented a room from Miss Emilie Kathrin Schlichter in the Talgasse 22 (now called the Talstrasse). On 20 October 1904 he transferred to the Gessnerallee 40 (near the main railway station) to live in the house of Isaak Baruch Weil, a cattle dealer, but returned to his room in Miss Schlichter’s house on 13 April 1905. He became a member of the Gesellschaft ehemaliger Polytechniker (Association of ex-students of the Federal Polytechnic).

On 25 October 1904, Professor Stodola informed Colonel Naville, Vice-President of the Swiss School Council of the Federal Polytechnic, that his Assistant, Engineer Stierlin, was absent on military service until 16 November 1904, and recommended that Engineer Fanno be engaged to replace him until the return of his permanent assistant. It was officially confirmed by the Swiss School Council on 27 October 1904 that Professor Stodola’s request had been granted, and Gino Fanno became a temporary assistant to Professor Stodola until 16 November 1904, with an honorary fee of Fr. 100.—

The municipal authorities of Zurich recorded Fanno’s definitive return to Italy on 31 July 1905.
Italy

a) The early years, 1905-1924

I have not been able to determine what Fanno did between 1905 and 1907, but it seems certain that he was not an assistant to Professor Modesto Panetti (1875-1957) from 1904 until 1906. From 1899 to 1902 Panetti was an assistant to Professor Stodola in Zurich, but from 1902 to 1909 Panetti was Professor of applied mechanics at the Regia Scuola d'Ingegneria Navale Di Genova. This school was later absorbed by the University of Genoa, and they can find no trace of Gino Fanno in their records.

According to his nephew, Dr. Giorgio Vital, Fanno joined the Genova-Sestri branch of the San Giorgio company in 1907.

Fanno married Olga Schmidt Steiner, a Czech citizen of Roman Catholic faith, in Genova-Pegli on 18 October 1913. He met her in Genoa, where she was a teacher of Czech and German. She was born in Kwastow, Czechoslovakia on 21 July 1883, the daughter of a lawyer who later moved to Prague. Olga Fanno’s main interests were painting, sculpture and horticulture. Her sister Lidia, who also lived in Genoa, married the Finnish consul Ejner Boesgoord.

Gino Fanno’s father, Giacomo Fanno, died in Conegliano on 27 December 1921, and was buried in the Jewish quarter of the cemetery San Giuseppe in Conegliano.

Fanno bought a rather large residence in Genova-Pegli, viale Modugno 24 A in 1924, where he lived with his wife almost continuously for the next 40 years while he worked for the San Giorgio company in Genova-Sestri, which was not far from his home. Olga Fanno designed and constructed an original fire-place in this house.

b) The middle years (1924-1939)

Fanno’s mother, Emma, lived with her daughter, Anna Vital, in Rome for some time after her husband’s death, and then later with her son, Marco Fanno in Padua. She died there on 26 October 1928, and was buried next to her husband in the San Giuseppe cemetery in Conegliano.

In 1919 Fanno was charged with the establishment of the Pistoia branch of the San Giorgio company, and purchased the villa Turricchio near
Le Botteghe, between Fucecchio and Montecatini (Province of Florence). This villa possesses vineyards which produce a classic Chianti wine. The label on the wine-bottles illustrates mountains and a dove with a palm branch, which was the coat of arms of the Panicacci family. Fanno bought Turricchio from a bankrupt engineer called Ogier, who had married a member of the Panicacci family. The Panicacci family were descendents of the famous Chigi family of Siena and Rome.

Gino and Olga Fanno made friends in the town of Fucecchio with the pharmacist Dr. Bruno Panzani and his wife Liliana, and used to visit them often. On 30 March 1931 Gino Fanno was presented with an illuminated parchment manuscript from his colleagues at the San Giorgio company in Genova-Sestri, commemorating his royal nomination as Commendatore della Corona d’Italia. He received this award for his contribution to research on submarine periscopes.

Gino’s brother, Marco, a renowned Professor of economics at the University of Padua, was elected as a national member of the illustrious Accademia dei Lincei in 1932. He was married to Countess Matilde Sernagiotti di Casavecchia, and their marriage also remained childless.

On 29 July 1935 Fanno received the degree Dottore in ingegneria industriale from the Regia Istituto Superiore d’Ingegneria di Genova.

The Italian fascist racial legislation began in 1938, and came into effect with law no. 50/2052 dated 28 January 1939. Fanno’s personal details were received by the municipal authorities of Genoa on 23 February 1939, and Fanno was accordingly professionally and socially degraded, because of his Jewish faith, by the Prefecture of Genoa on 18 May 1939. This degradation was communicated to the municipal authorities in Conegliano, and registered there on 7 August 1939.

c) The later years (1940-1962)

Fanno left Genova-Pegli sometime at the end of 1939 or the beginning of 1940, presumably for the villa Turricchio. He left after his wife.

During the pre-war years Fanno had made the acquaintance and friendship of a Roman Catholic Prelate, Monsignore Gioacchino Rosati, of the Diocese of San Miniato, not far from his villa in Fucecchio. It was perhaps Monsignore Rosati who influenced Fanno in his conversion to Roman Catholicism.
Gino Fanno was baptised with the rites of an adult into the Catholic faith in the Chapel of the General Vicar of the Diocese of San Miniato on 30 June 1941 at 10 a.m. by Monsignore Rosati, with the Christian names Gino, Girolamo, Maria. His godfather, present at the baptism, was the Reverend Giulio Frediani, senior priest of the parish of Fucecchio. Fanno's confirmation took place on 8 November 1941 and was carried out by Monsignore Ugo Giubbi in the Chapel of the Bishop of San Miniato.¹⁶

In 1943 Fanno was in the town of Terni (Umbria),¹⁷ where Olga Fanno suffered facial injuries during an air-raid, and had to be taken into the civil hospital. After a short time this hospital was evacuated, for reasons of safety, to Acquasparta, a small town about 15 miles north of Terni. Gino and Olga Fanno arrived here in August 1943, and lodged in the Pensione della Fonte.¹⁸ Fanno made the acquaintance of the pharmacist Vitaliano Brutti in Acquasparta. In October 1943, the air-raids had not ceased, particularly around the railway station, and Brutti arranged for Fanno and his wife to be accommodated by a friend, Colombo Barcaroli, in the isolated hill village of Macerino, some 8 miles east of Acquasparta.

FIGURE 2

Gino and Olga Fanno were driven there in a horse-drawn coach, and were given simple, warm and friendly accommodation by Colombo Barcaroli and his wife in his house for about a year. Fanno paid their accommodation expenses in old Italian currency (which was apparently still highly acceptable), and during this time became a friend of Padre Adolfo Inches, the priest of the church San Biagio in Macerino. Fanno relaxed, went walking, and helped with the work in the fields. In the evening he enjoyed a cigar and a glass of wine. During his stay in Macerino Fanno never left the village, and would not allow himself to be photographed. He attended the church San Biagio regularly with his wife. Olga Fanno found company with Barcaroli's wife, Fiorelli Flora, helped in the garden and collected acorns and berries to roast for coffee.¹⁹

Colombo Barcaroli still lives in Macerino with his daughter, Pierina Barcaroli in Agostinelli, and his grand-daughter, Roberta. They have a small bar and a general dealer's store. Adolfo Inches' niece, Virginia Orsini Massarucci, also lives in Macerino, and is a primary school-teacher in Acquasparta.

FIGURE 3
After the war, Fanno spent much of his spare time in his villa Turricchio in Fucecchio, where he continued his interests in agriculture and agricultural engineering. He bought tractors and, with his technical ability, built the first ground-water pumps in the area. After his retirement with the San Giorgio company, where he had had a chauffeur, he took up driving again.

FIGURE 4

In 1960, after a heart attack, Fanno became paralysed in both legs. He died in Genova-Pegli on 26 March 1962, at the age of 79, and was buried in the Christian part of the San Giuseppe cemetery in Conegliano. His wife, Olga, also died in Genova-Pegli on 18 July 1966, and was buried in the same cemetery next to her husband.


5. Professor Bruno Rosada, President of the Istituto Paolo Sarpi: written communication dated 9 September 1976.

6. According to Professor Bruno Rosada of the Istituto Paolo Sarpi, the Collegio Ravà was succeeded by the Collegio navale Francesco Morosini, but its present Commandant, Vittorio Valente, knows nothing of the Collegio Ravà: written communication dated 18 October 1980.

7. Civil archives in the municipal authority of the city of Zurich.

8. Enrolment form of the Swiss Federal Polytechnic, October 1900.

9. Dr. J.Keller could have been the teacher Dr.phil. Joseph Alois Keller, who at this time had a private school in the Frauenmünsterstrasse 19 in Zurich for the "Preparation for the entrance examination to the Federal Polytechnic, as well as for the federal and cantonal matriculation. Language and commercial school."

10. Hans Stierlin (1882-1960), who was Professor for mathematics and physics at the Cantonal High School in Zurich from 1908 to 1927.

11. All the official Italian archives give Olga Fanno's place of birth as "Kwastow" (as well as "Kvastov"), but I have not been able to identify the geographical location of this place.

13. This illuminated manuscript is in my possession. It was sent to me by Dr. Giorgio Vital, Lucca.

14. I saw this diploma myself in the villa Turricchio in September 1976, together with Fanno's own personal copy of Stodola's Dampfturbinen, (4th edition, 1910), with Gino Fanno's signature on the title-page. It contained a blueprint from the San Giorgio company, and drawings presumably by Fanno himself. This book and its contents are in my possession, which were sent to me by Dr. Giorgio Vital, Lucca.

In the villa Turricchio I also saw two files of private correspondence to or by Gino or Olga Fanno, as well as several Diplôme di benemerenza for 30 and more years' service with the San Giorgio company in Genova-Sestri. The villa was bequeathed by Fanno to his nephew, Dr. Giorgio Vital, who sold it to a Pisa lawyer, G. Cacciapaglia, and in September 1976 it belonged to the latter. In Turricchio I only met his wife, Luciana Cacciapaglia.

15. In September 1976, I met a former neighbour of Fanno in the viale G. Modugno in Genova-Pegli. He stated that in 1939 or 1940 he had been leaving his house and had noticed Gino Fanno at the window of an upstairs bedroom. Fanno beckoned him to wait, and when he arrived on the street, begged this neighbour to accompany him to the railway station in Genova-Pegli. There was a German garrison near the viale Modugno, and Fanno had been more or less a prisoner in his own house and had not dared to leave it. He left Genova-Pegli without his wife and without luggage. I presume, for the following reasons, that Fanno went to the villa Turricchio: Colombo Barcaroli stated that Fanno arrived in Macerino in 1941; Dr. Bruno Panzani stated that Fanno was in Fucecchio during the war; Vitaliano Brusseti stated that Fanno arrived in Acquasparta in August 1943; but Fanno was baptised on 30 June 1941 in San Miniato, which is not very far from the villa Turricchio. This leads me to believe that in 1941 Fanno cannot have been far away from San Miniato, and hardly in Macerino, which is well over 200 miles away from Genova-Pegli. Even if Fanno had been in Macerino, the return journey during the war would have been both difficult and dangerous.

17. I have not been able to determine why Fanno was in Terni.
1. Nidia Basei, Director of the San Francesco School, Conegliano, dated 31 October 1976: reply to a question about Fanno's attendance at San Francesco.

2. Professor Bruno Rosada, President of the Istituto Tecnico Statale Commerciale "Paolo Sarpi", Venice, dated 8 September 1976: Fanno's education at the Istituto "Paolo Sarpi".


6. Dr.ing. Alberto Cantù, Rome, dated 2 September 1976 (Fanno's colleague at the San Giorgio company, Genova-Sestri): personal biographical recollections.


11. Comune di Conegliano, dated 9 April 1968: biographical information about Gino Fanno, supplied by Dr. Giorgio Vital, which formed the basis of the biographical sketch of Professor Tripp's article in "Engineering Education", September 1965.


PHOTOGRAPHS

NEGATIVES

1. Giacomo Fanno's grave in the San Giuseppe cemetery, Conegliano.
2. Emma Fanno's grave in the San Giuseppe cemetery, Conegliano.
3. Anna Fanno's grave in the San Giuseppe cemetery, Conegliano.
4. San Giorgio company, Genova-Sestri.
5. San Giorgio company, Genova-Sestri.
7. Villa Turricchio in Fucecchio.
8. Illuminated parchment manuscript presented to Gino Fanno by his colleagues in the San Giorgio company on his award of the "Commenda della Corona d'Italia" in 1931.
10. Colombo Barcaroli's house in Macerino.
11. Colombo Barcaroli's house in Macerino.
12. Colombo Barcaroli with his daughter Pierina Barcaroli in Agostinelli and grand-daughter Roberta in Macerino.

POSITIVES

17. Physics Laboratory in the Istituto "Paolo Sarpi", in Venice.
18. Gino Fanno in 1935.
19. Olga Fanno in the grounds of the Villa Turricchio, Fucecchio, ca.1940.
20. Olga Fanno (2nd from right) with members of the Barcaroli family outside their house in Macerino, ca.1943.
DOCUMENTS

1. Extract from Gino Fanno's personal records in the Registry of the Commune of Conegliano (Photocopy).


3. Gino Fanno's matriculation, study and graduation records from the Eidgenössisches Polytechnikum, Zürich, October 1900 - March 1904 (Photocopy).

4. Written request, dated 25 October 1904, from Professor Stodola to Colonel Naville, Vice-President of the School Council, for Fanno to replace his regular assistant Sierlin for the period 27 October 1904 - 16 November 1904 (Photocopy).

5. Confirmation and acceptance of Professor Stodola's request by the School Council (Photocopy).

6. Illuminated parchment manuscript presented to Gino Fanno by his colleagues at the San Giorgio company, Genova-Sestri on 30 March 1931 on the occasion of his award of the "Commenda della Corona d'Italia".


8. Technical drawing of part of a steam turbine with calculations, presumably by Gino Fanno. (Found in Stodola's "Dampfturbinen")

9. Envelope addressed to Gino Fanno, dated Roma 1956, on the verso of which is a small technical drawing and calculations. (Found in Stodola's "Dampfturbinen")

10. Blueprint design of a periscope, dated 6 September 1925, from the San Giorgio company, Genova-Sestri. (Found in Stodola's "Dampfturbinen").


12. Label of the wine produced in the grounds of the Villa "Turricchio" showing the emblem of the Panicacci family and an engraving of the villa.


15. Original signatures of Colombo Barcaroli and his daughter Pierina Barcaroli in Agostinelli, both in Macerino(Umbria.)