



City of Chicago
Office of the City Clerk
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O2019-1412

Meeting Date: 3/13/2019
Sponsor(s): O'Connor (40)
Type: Ordinance
Title: Honorary street designation as "Sam Franco Way"
Committee(s) Assignment: Committee on Transportation and Public Way

**City Council Meeting
March 13, 2019**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO;

SECTION 1. Pursuant to an ordinance heretofore passed by the City Council which allows erection of honorary street-name signs, the Commissioner of Transportation shall take the necessary action for standardization of the 5100 block of North Claremont Avenue as “Sam Franco Way.”

SECTION 2. This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and publication.



**PATRICK J. O'CONNOR
Alderman, 40th Ward**

Date: 3/11/19

Office of Budget and Management
121 N. LaSalle, Room 604
Chicago, IL 60602

To Whom It May Concern:

I, PATRICK J. O'CONNOR, Alderman of the 40th Ward, hereby authorize the Office of Budget Management to withdraw the funds associated with the cost of installation for this honorary street designation for SAM FRANCO
from my: 5105-5200 N. CLAREMONT

- Ward's annual menu program budget
- Ward's aldermanic expance allowance

upon passage of this designation ordinance, pursuant to Section 2-8-040 of the Chicago Municipal Code.

Sincerely,



Alderman

November 29, 2018

40th Ward – Alderman O’Connor

5850 N. Lincoln Avenue

Chicago, IL 60659

RE: Honorary Street Name Designation – Sam Franco

Dear Alderman O’Connor,

This letter is to propose a Designation for Sam Franco, for the block of 5105 – 5200 N. Claremont, 60625.

I would like to introduce you to a musician, an artist and a true Chicagoan, Sam Franco. Sam was born in Chicago in 1924. For 63 of those years Sam lived at 5105 N Claremont.

As a young man he studied from the master musician who immigrated to Chicago from Italy. During his service in WWII at the age of nineteen, Sam was the lead musician and band leader for his Army Air Corp Division. Upon his return from service, Sam began teaching and continued to the end of his life this year in 2018.

His knowledge of music is unsurpassed having dedicated his life to both the technical study of music as well as music theory. His influence is far reaching as many of his students have gone on to music careers themselves.

Sam has been featured on NPR’s This American Life in The Chicago Reader, and Fra Noi, a Chicagoland Italian Magazine. In 2013 Sam was inducted into the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame for his contributions to the Arts.

In addition to his musical teaching knowledge, Sam worked with the Old Town School of Folk Music for many years assisting with accordion repairs, which is almost a lost skill, and other musical contributions.

While following his musical dream, Sam also worked for many years at Kemper Insurance while raising a family of 4 children, all who grew up at the family home at 5105 N Claremont and attended Chappell Elementary and Amundsen High School. Sam also attended Amundsen many years ago when it offered adult college classes.

His legacy is carried on as students from years past have sent their children to learn as they did. For this proposal to be approved would be a true honor for our family as we continue to call Claremont our home.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please feel free to visit Sam’s website at www.accordionchicago.com

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Franco & Family

Kolbus-John V. May

Sam Franco

(October 19, 1924 - October 05, 2018)

Sam Franco age 93 born on October 19, 1924 passed away on October 5, 2018 at his home Chicago, Illinois. Sam, beloved husband of the late Rose, loving father of Dave (Mary) Franco, Barbara Franco (John Roberts) and Angela Franco (Michael McCafferty); cherished grandfather of Anthony and Dawn. Sam served in WWII in the Army Air Corp Division for 4 years. In 1955, after the war, Sam went to Italy and met his beautiful wife Rose of 60 years.



Sam was a prominent accordion player and musician for over 80 years. In 2013, Sam was honored by being inducted into the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame in the Arts Category. He was also featured on National Public Radio's *This American Life*, in *The Chicago Reader* and the Italian magazine *Fra Noi* for his many musical accomplishments. His legacy is carried on as students from years past will continue to play and carry on his knowledge of music. In lieu of flowers, contributions to The National Kidney Foundation, www.nkfi.org

Visitation Friday 4:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Kolbus-John V. May Funeral Home, 6857 W. Higgins Ave. Chicago. Funeral Services and Entombment Private. For information, call 773-774-3232 or www.kolbusmayfh@gmail.com

Deceased - 10/05/18

A & E Accordion ace

As the 82-year-old owner of the Italian Accordion Studio on Chicago's North Side, Sam Franco has seen the landing of Italy Balbo, Chicago's Century of Progress, the Great Depression and World War II. Through 70 years of both playing and teaching, this Taylor Street native has also seen the popularity of his instrument rise and fall with the changing times.

"If you walked down Taylor Street when I was growing up, most of the kids would either be outside playing street games or inside practicing the accordion," says Franco, who was born on Garibaldi Street. "In the old days 'music' meant sheet music played on the piano. But most of the people in my neighborhood either couldn't afford a piano or didn't have room for one, so everybody played the accordion."

Young people like Franco grew up idolizing accordion players, who appeared on the radio or at in-store promotions to sell sheet music.

"I used to listen to Tommy Camino, who was one of the great jazz accordionists, and Charles Magnante, who had a No. 1 hit with 'Moonlight Sonata,'" Franco says. "I was also fortunate enough to be inspired by two great teachers, Andy Rizzo and Paul Minors."

Like Franco, these Italian-American artists were carrying on a storied marriage between the accordion and Italian culture. The roots of the instrument go back to 3,000 B.C., when the Chinese Emperor Huang Ti designed a bellows and reeded box to try to imitate the sound of the phoenix bird. However, the instrument did not make its way to Europe until thousands of years later. The first accordion was patented in Austria in 1829. In those days, most complex music was produced by piano or organ, so the idea of a portable instrument caught on quickly. It didn't take long for the instrument to make its way to Italy.

"Legend has it that a sailor from Austria came to the port of Castel Fidardo on the Ionic Sea," Franco says. "He left a harmonica for a kid and the Italians attached it to a bellows, which was later developed into the full-fledged accordion."

From that time until today, the region of Castel Fidardo is known for producing Italy's greatest accordionist. It was during this same period (between 1870-1910) that Italian composers were writing songs like "O' Sole Mio," and other classic love songs.

"Because of their deep, romantic sound, many of the great Italian, and especially Neapolitan, love



Sam Franco has remained devoted to the romantic tones of the accordion through seven decades of dramatic societal change.

songs were suited for the accordion," Franco says. "This was also true of the Italian tangos, which are slower and more soulful than the Argentinian tangos."

The accordion thus became an integral part of the "sound of Naples." In the early 1900s, many Neapolitans began arriving in Chicago's Taylor Street area. This is how Franco first became acquainted with the instrument.

"At first, I didn't like it, but my father kept telling me to practice," says Franco, whose parents are from the region of Calabria. "I have made a living from it most of my life so I guess you can say he was right."

Although he grew up during the Great Depression, Franco's father, who worked as a carpenter at the World's Fair, was able to afford lessons for Franco in what is now the Fine Arts Building.

"My father worked at the World's Fair in 1933 and 1934," Franco says. "I remember he used to take me there and I thought how lucky I was to be going for free. It was the Depression of course, so I was even luckier that he had enough money

to send me to music school."

Franco soon became so proficient at the instrument that he began to give lessons himself. "There are two types of accordion players," he points out. "Those who play many notes and who are highly technical, and those who are natural players who play good music. I always aspired to be the second."

As word of his talent spread, he began to get regular jobs or "gigs." Many of these were at Ferrara Hall, which was above the original Ferrara Bakery on Taylor and Halsted.

"Oh, I remember those weddings at Ferrara Hall," Franco says. "Some of them were big ones, but you have to remember most of us were still poor, so a lot of the times they would just bring up a tray of beef sandwiches and some folding chairs and tables. We would play while the people danced."

Franco was drafted at the age of 18. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, where he worked as a clerk and entertained the troops with his accordion on weekends. After the war, he rejoined civilian life, giving lessons and selling accordions. Yet he noticed that post-war America was changing as the ethnic enclaves were rapidly disappearing in favor of a "new America" in the suburbs.

"Much of my job was going into people's homes to both give lessons and sell accordions," Franco says. "We realized that the home market was moving to the suburbs, and I was able to build a house and raise my children by developing a clientele in the new suburbs like Niles, Franklin Park and Elmwood Park."

Both Franco and the accordion continued to prosper through the 1950s and into the '60s. In 1963, both the world of music and the entire nation watched as a group from England changed American popular culture.

"As far as the accordion goes, everything stopped in 1964," Franco says. "Things slowed down a little bit with Elvis, but when the Beatles came, it was over — kaput!"

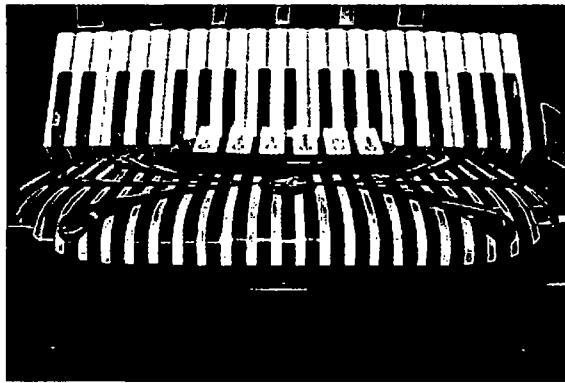
At that time Franco began to teach the instrument of the Beatles, the guitar. Today, at the age of 82, he continues to give lessons from his home on Chicago's North Side.

"I like the guitar, but if I had my way I would still teach only accordion," Franco says. "The instrument has been very good to me, and I still love playing and hearing its warm, romantic tones."

The Italian Accordion Studios can be contacted at 773-561-2135.

by David Witter

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Accordion Chicago Sam Franco

Italian Accordion Studio

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**Sam Franco is an
accomplished
accordion player,
teacher and
composer with
over 50 years
experience. He offers music
lessons to students of all levels
and buys, sells and repairs
accordions.**



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Deceased - 10/05/18