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## 'The Epic of Lou Bolchazy' a classic tale of vision, zest, fun

By **Burt Constable**

Even if you only consider the literature, art, music, religion, culture and history made a millennium before the Renaissance, eccentric publisher Lou Bolchazy of Lake Barrington still qualifies as a true Renaissance man.

A colorful classics professor at Loyola University in Chicago who spoke six languages, Ladislaus J. "Lou" Bolchazy was so passionate about bringing stories and lessons of the ancient Romans and Greeks to our modern world that he started his own publishing company 35 years ago with his wife, Marie, to make that dream come true.

When he died at age 75 on July 28, 2012, less than a month after being diagnosed with end-stage stomach cancer, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers was in the midst of its most profitable year ever with more than \$2.2 million in sales. Now, with his wife as president and his 47-year-old son, Allan, as vice president of his company, Bolchazy is piling up the honors posthumously.

At last month's annual fall meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States, scholars dedicated programs to Bolchazy's contributions. American Classical League President Sherwin Little gave a talk titled, "Viam inveniam aut faciam: Lou Bolchazy's Impact on the Teaching of Classics." Other scholars gave similar tributes. Bolchazy's name now is attached to honors, awards and contributions that provide scholarships, and more tributes are coming. More of Bolchazy's honors and life can be found on [bolchazy.com](http://bolchazy.com).

The author of "Hospitality in Antiquity," Bolchazy developed a radio series called "Myth Is Truth," was co-founder and co-editor of the scholarly journal "Ancient World," editor of the "Classical Bulletin," and also presided over the Slovak American International Cultural Foundation. His boyhood in the Nazi-occupied village of Michalovce, Slovakia, figured into his publishing of diverse works such as the book of Igor Grossman' beautiful photographs preserving the Slovak folk life to the disturbing but comprehensive collection of Adolf Hitler's speeches and commentary.

Bolchazy began his publishing company by producing a cheap, stapled copy of "Rome and Her Kings." While most publishers were phasing out books in Latin, the upstart company, originally located in Wauconda and now settled into a much larger building in Mundelein, published the books Bolchazy thought people should read. High schools, colleges and home-school programs agreed.

The colorful Bolchazy loved the ancient world. He could talk for hours about "The Epic of Gilgamesh," which was written about 2,500 years before Christ and might have been humanity's first book and Bolchazy's favorite. Tethered to the past, Bolchazy was immune to pop culture trends. As a college professor in the 1960s, he had never heard of The Beatles.

But his appreciation for the ancient world didn't stop him from thinking about the future. In 2008, his company launched a "Latin for the New Millennium" series that now is the most popular introductory Latin series in the nation and the biggest moneymaker for the company. "They are our pride and joy," Marie Bolchazy says of

those books. An educator who worked for school districts in Naperville and Barrington and also boasts a doctoral degree, Marie Bolchazy joined with her husband to take chances in their attempts to educate new generations.

“He did focus a lot on making Latin accessible,” Marie Bolchazy, 75, says of her husband.

The couple hired Latin scholars to translate Dr. Seuss’ classic “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” into “Quomodo Invidiosulus nomine Grinchus Christi natalem Abrogaverit,” which became a surprise hit in 1998 and still sells. That led to Latin versions of Seuss’ “The Cat in the Hat” and “Green Eggs and Ham,” as well as Shel Silverstein’s “The Giving Tree.”

In the company library, shelves still display the Loeb Classical Library featuring century-old copies of books in the original Greek and Latin from Aeschylus to Xenophon. But the company catalog offers e-books and the freedom to build custom textbooks through its Academic Pub website and buy digital downloads, MP3s and apps from its iPodius online store.

The dozen employees, many of whom have been with the company for years, all talk about how Lou Bolchazy’s spirit still drives the company. They host a Founder’s Day Celebration in his honor. “We tell stories about him,” Marie Bolchazy says. “There’s a theme and everybody gets a free lunch.”

His son, a construction engineer who left that world to oversee projects and handle contracts for the publishing company, has taken over his dad’s office. But there is one room that still gives guests a sense of Lou Bolchazy’s boundless zest for his homeland and the classics while acknowledging his quirky sense of humor. A sign in Latin on the door translates as “Here Lies a Good Man.” Inside is a couch with a quilt.

“That,” Marie Bolchazy says, “is where Lou would take his naps.”

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