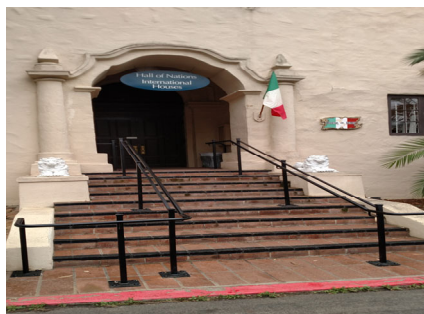


# NAVIGATOR

MAY, 2019



The House of Italy



## The House of Italy (HOI) Mission:

Our mission is to offer to its members and the public through its cultural and social programs, an understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of Italy.

Our vision is that our HOI members celebrate their Italian heritage and culture with the people of San Diego.



## Carissimi Soci

Happy Mother's Day to all of you moms! I wish all of you a very special day.

We have two meetings before we close for the months of July and August. At our May meeting, Chef Mark Pelliccia is doing a presentation on Italian Cuisine, Past, Present and Future. You won't want to miss this meeting. Then in June, Samuele Bagnai and Viktoria Rusnakova will present, Two Stories, One Love. Not wanting to spoil their stories, you will need to be there to hear all about it. Copies of their books will be available for purchase.

This month's newsletter is dedicated to one of our distinguished, long standing members, Louis Castello, who passed away on Friday April 26, 2019. Lou and his lovely bride, Gemma, have been actively involved with the House of Italy for decades. Be sure to read how a young man left Italy and arrived in America with nothing but his will and determination to live the American dream.

Don't forget to sign up to host the house on either Saturday or Sunday. For those of you who do not have a food handler's certificate, not to worry! We have biscotti individually packaged that you can serve with Italian pride. Please be sure to call Bob D'Amico for hosting. His cell number is 619-456-1594. He will certainly appreciate hearing from you. See you on May 19th!

**Carol Gratzke**



HOI Hotline  
858 212 3300

House of Italy  
Attn: President  
415 Laurel St. #301  
San Diego, CA 92101

Executive Board

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Carol Gratzke

1st Vice President :  
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## House of Italy Future Events

**Sunday, May, 19th HOI Membership meeting@ 5:00pm:**

**HOI dinner meeting featuring Chef Mark Pelliccia doing a presentation on Italian Cuisine. Please see page 3 for details.**

**Sunday, June 16th HOI Membership meeting:**

**Samuele Bagnai and Viktoria Rusnakova wil present their very unique books to our membership. More details in the June newsletter.**



**Gemma & Lou Castello**  
**A great American success story**



# Past, Present and Future of Italian Cuisine.

May 19, 2019  
5:00pm



***Come explore the history of Italy's cuisine, how many of our favorite recipes have origins from other countries and the evolution of Italian American cuisine.***

Born in New York as a first-generation Italian-American where food really played a big part of my life as me and my brother spent the better part of our childhoods running around in restaurants. At the age of 18, I left for Europe where I would spend 16 years, not only attending culinary school while studying its history languages and cultures, but also working with some of its best chefs. While I do specialize in Italian cuisine and culture, I spend most of my time studying world cuisines and cultures.

You can find some of this research in my e-book I previously published, "Horribly written history: A cooks research into how food has influenced our past and present".

***I hope to see you all on May 19th.***

Mark J. Pelliccia



## **Remembrance – LOUIS CASTELLO**

### **An extraordinary story of a San Diego Immigrant**

By Castello Family, 5/5/2019

Louis, known as “Louie” by his friends, had early years that were typical of a San Diego immigrant from Italy in the 1950’s. Here is a brief overview of his life.

Louis Castello was born in 1930 in the small town of Fornillo at the base of Mt Vesuvius near Naples Italy. He was born the second youngest of seven children to Angelo and Emilia Castiello. His father, who left to work in the United States while Louis was still an infant, died of a heart attack before Louis ever got a chance to know his father.

Louis’ family in Italy was poor, so once he finished elementary school he quit school to work in a local macaroni factory. He would say the factory owners treated him as a son because they knew of his family situation. There he worked until 1948. When he turned 18, he immigrated to the US on a merchant ship with his younger brother Pat. They came to San Diego with only a few personal possessions to join his older American born brother and sister.

Upon his arrival to San Diego, Louis and his brother Pat lived with his oldest sister. Her household was already full with her large family and Louis’ mother. Knowing the added burden his arrival imposed on the sister’s family, he immediately worked to resolve this uncomfortable living situation. A year later, working long hours seven days a week as a baker he managed to save enough to buy a simple small house on Imperial Ave. His first goal to buy a house in America was quickly achieved. There he lived with his younger brother and mother for several years dreaming of a future when the remaining family members in Italy could finally join them.

In the meantime, he worked and studied English to become an American citizen. It was in 1954, while taking night school English class, Louis went outside for a class break and spotted a beautiful Sicilian girl. He immediately fell in love. This woman of course, would later be his loving wife Gemma. And what girl could resist him—he was tall, handsome, he could serenade, and had that signature Louis charm. Two years later, in April 1956, they were married.

A few years later, Louis worked as a gardener by day and a baker at night. Gardening was Gemma's Poma family occupation in San Diego which he tried and quickly adopted. At the suggestion of Gemma, Louis quit his night job at the bakery to pursue gardening full time. He continued his grueling seven-day work schedule, and within a decade, developed his gardening business into one that earned the respect and appreciation of clients from La Mesa to La Jolla. Back then his reputation, charm and good looks was all he had, there was no mass advertising and marketing through social websites. But his God-given qualities served him well, always.

At this point, by any objective measure, Louis could qualify as successful. His business was thriving, he lived in a custom home in La Mesa, and was comfortably supporting a growing family. Given his humble beginnings, he would have been justified in stopping here and settling into a pleasantly status quo existence. But Louis - ever the entrepreneur - had bigger ambitions, deciding instead to leverage his success as a gardener to reach even greater heights in real estate.

Louis was always on the lookout for new investment properties, and seemed to have a natural intuition for a good deal. Where others saw junk, he saw treasure. With his trusted brother-in-law and business partner Frank Vigliaturo, they bought less desirable properties, fixed them up, rented them for a profit. Then they reinvested those profits into replacing old structures on existing properties or buying the next place.

It's important to keep in mind that nobody taught Louis how to run a property management business. What Louis lacked in formal education he made up for in instinct and good timing. What he did not know, he got assistance from qualified professionals for matters in lending, accounting, insurance, tenant law, property acquisition, and property development. Those business relationships were long lasting and often members of the Italian community. But it is important to note that most of the weekly property repairs were done by Louis and his partner Frank. Only occasionally seeking the help of professionals for the endless stream of building maintenance issues along the way.

In the end, his investments paid off. He retired from his gardening business in his early 50s. But not so he could relax or take up golf, but so that he could focus all of his energy on managing and growing his network of properties, which he continued to do up until his final years. He was proud of his financial success and rightly so. He was a self-made man and the epitome of the American Dream. Louis was grateful for the opportunities afforded by his adopted country. So much so that he considered himself an American first, and Italian second.

Louis, along Gemma his wife of nearly 63 years, provided for and nurtured their loving family. They had three children, twin sons Richard and Robert, and younger daughter, Emily.

Later the family grew to seven grandchildren, two great-grandchildren with another on the way. Louis was always proud of his children and their families. While he was not educated himself, he managed to inspire all his children and grandchildren to set their educational goals high and achieve a good financial future as a productive working professionals.

He was an active member for years in the following Italian-American clubs: Sons of Italy, Italian Catholic Federation and House of Italy. Although he was not a deeply religious man, he believed in God and the religious traditions of the Catholic Church.

Fundamentally, Louis was a man with simple desires. Although he could afford luxuries, he didn't care about fancy cars, lavish houses, or high tech gadgets popular at the time. Aside from his work, his interests were spending time with family, tending to his garden, and eating Gemma's legendary Italian food. He did enjoy traveling on multiple vacations with his wife and daughter. Louis and Gemma traveled back to Italy often to enjoy time with extended family and friends in Italy and retracing the locations of their youth.

If you ask anyone what Louis loved, very quickly one of several things will probably come to mind: singing, food, family, money, gardening, bragging about all things Italian and telling stories. He could sit next to anyone, anywhere and find something to talk about. He would actively engage anyone (e.g. rich, poor, outgoing, shy) in conversation on any topic (known or unknown). In business he tried to treat people equally with little regard for differences in religion, race, sexual orientation or politics. When traveling on vacation on a plane, train, ship or bus he would talk to people around him for hours; and if allowed, telling them stories of himself and his life experiences.

Sadly, his health declined over the last few years. If he were able, he would still have had the desire to push forward with all his ambitions. Losing his only daughter Emily in Dec 2018 to brain cancer was a devastating loss in his life. He missed her very much and struggled as to why she was taken so young. He lived a long productive life until he died in his own home on April 26, 2019 at 89 years old.

In closing, his life was best summarized by his grandchildren:

*"As a grandfather, Nonno had no equal. He was an unwavering source of enthusiasm, encouragement and support. As we got older and went off to school and started jobs, he would always tell us we made him proud, often with a tear in his eye. I can't imagine what it must have felt like for him, coming from such humble beginnings, to witness his family grow and follow opportunities he never could have dreamed of. Nonno radiated a positive energy, he made you believe in life's limitless possibilities and our great potential; that if we tried, we could do anything."*





HOUSE OF ITALY

ATTN: PRESIDENT

415 LAUREL ST. #301

SAN DIEGO, CA 92101



[www.houseofitalysandiego.org](http://www.houseofitalysandiego.org)

For information about the San Diego Italian Film Festival events,  
please go to: [www.sandiegoitalianfilmfestival.com](http://www.sandiegoitalianfilmfestival.com)

### Saturday & Sunday HOI Hosting

The House of Italy is now open from  
11:00 am to 4:00 pm on Sundays and  
11:00 am to 4:00 pm on Saturdays.  
Please call Bob D'Amico to volunteer  
for hosting duties @ 619-456-1594

Sunday, May 19th: HOI Membership  
Meeting @ 5:00 pm in the Hall of  
Nations

### HOI Hosting Assignments—2019

Saturday, May 11; Maria Sotelo-Ocha

Sunday, May 12: Carol Gratzke

Saturday, May 18: **Need volunteer**

Sunday, May 19: Christine Calvano

Saturday, May 25: Natasha DeLuca

Sunday, May 26: HOI is closed

Saturday, June 1: Maria Sotelo-Ocha

Sunday, June 2: **Need volunteer**



Napoli