

# Charles “Chuck” Della Sala, Jr.

1955

**MONTEREY MAYOR, REAL ESTATE BROKER, COMMUNITY SERVICE**

WRITTEN BY ANNAMARIE DELLA SALA-STANTON & ALEX DELLA SALA-NEFF

On November 7, 2006, Charles Della Sala, Jr., better known as Chuck Della Sala, was the third person of Italian descent elected to the highest office in the city of Monterey. He went on to serve four terms as mayor (eight years in total) and captured the hearts and minds of many Montereyans. The first time Chuck ran for mayor he garnered 61% of the vote, and the second time, 79% of the vote; the next two times he sought reelection as mayor he ran unopposed.



Chuck was born on September 2, 1955, in Monterey, California, the third of Charles Sr. “Charlie” and Monterey-native Rose Marie (Bruno) Della Sala’s five children. His father, Charlie, was born in New York in 1927, but returned to his parents’ native town of Forino, in the province of Avellino, Italy, in 1930 after the tragic death of his mother Anna Moreno Della Sala. After 16 years Charlie returned to the United States in 1946 still an American citizen and joined the Army. While stationed at the Defense Language School he met and married Rosie Bruno on November 12, 1949, at the San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey. They raised five children—AnnaMarie, Anthony, Charles Jr. “Chuck”, Kathleen and Maryann. Chuck’s father served the city of Monterey as a firefighter for 26 and a half years before retiring as a battalion chief. In 1977 Charlie and Rosie established Pacific Street Real Estate, Inc.

Rosie’s parents Giuseppe and Giuseppina Cardinale Bruno were both born and

raised in Isola delle Femmine, Sicily, Italy. They came to Monterey by way of Pittsburg, California. Giuseppe was a fisherman and came to fish the Monterey Bay in 1922. Rosie was born in Monterey the fifth of six children. That large extended Italian family of aunts, uncles and cousins was a big part of Chuck's experience growing up in Monterey. Both Rosie and Charlie worked hard, and believed no work was beneath them. Charlie took on two jobs to provide and get ahead and he and Rosie saved to acquire real estate, setting a great example on how to be successful. They instilled that attitude toward work in all their children. Charlie had a saying for everything. "If someone else can do it, you can do it as long as you are willing to work hard, but to be successful at some point in your life you have to sacrifice. If he can do it, so can you."

Chuck was raised in the Del Monte Grove, and Old Town neighborhoods of Monterey, he attended public schools—Del Monte, Thomas O'Larkin, Walter Colton Jr. High—and graduated from Monterey High School in 1973. He earned a bachelor's degree in business from Santa Clara University in 1977.

During his early years, Chuck had a paper route and worked for his uncle as a janitor, but, whenever he could, he played baseball, his favorite sport. He played on the street and at Montecito Park, for the *Herald* Little League team and a Babe Ruth team.

After graduating from Santa Clara University, Chuck married his sweetheart, Sandy Christopher, on April 22, 1978, and joined the family real estate business, Pacific Street Real Estate, Inc., first as a realtor and then as a broker. They had two

**Chuck and Sandy Della Sala.**



children: Alexandria “Alex” and Charles III “Chas.” Chuck is proud of both his daughter, Alex, and son, Chas, for their many accomplishments.

While attending Santa Clara University, Chuck was inspired to commit to public service. In particular it was his marketing professor who emphasized that the privilege of securing a great education brought with it the responsibility to give back to your hometown. Because of his love for Monterey, it was at that point in time Chuck knew he would get involved in community leadership and someday run for mayor as a way to personally give back. Charlie and Rosie portrayed an expectation that once you had what you needed, you would help others to achieve their goals. Their endless hours of involvement in the Sons of Italy, Italian Heritage Society, Italian Catholic Federation, Festa Italia and various other organizations demonstrated their willingness to give back to the community and served as an example for Chuck.

Family dinners were a time of bonding and sharing life experiences and politics. A loving set of parents and siblings helped Chuck feel comfortable in his own skin and develop the tolerance he would need to withstand criticism, a great asset for anyone holding public office. Even after Chuck married, the emotional support and bonding continued with weekly Sunday spaghetti dinners at Charlie and Rosie’s house. Charlie’s upbeat, positive outlook on life and his propensity for joking around rubbed off on Chuck. He can often be found with a smile on his face, facing obstacles through the lens of the glass half full, not half empty.

In the 1980s, Chuck was a member and officer of the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and Visitors and Convention Bureau, rising to president of the Chamber in 1989. He was a recipient of the Robert C. Littlefield Award, given in recognition for outstanding contributions to the Chamber, the community, the state and the nation.

In the 1990s Chuck coached his daughter's softball teams and his son's baseball teams. He was an inspiring and innovative coach. In 1994 while coaching the *Monterey All Stars*, Alex's softball team for 12 and under, Chuck entered the team in a tournament in Livermore, California, in which the winning team would earn a spot in the World Series of Girls Fast Pitch. Chuck's main objective was to give the girls an opportunity to play teams from out of the area and improve their skills, but not necessarily to take home the win. In spite of 105-degree heat the team was on a three-game winning streak. At the end of the third game the *Monterey All Stars* were notified that if they won the fourth and final game of the day that they would earn a berth to play in the World Series of Girls Fast Pitch. Chuck and the team were also told their last game would be against *Livermore Smoke*, who had fundraised all year and was favored to win and attend the prestigious World Series.

As the deciding game began the girls were exhausted, sore, and melting from the hot afternoon sun. Cold rags were laying in coolers of ice to help ease the discomfort everyone was feeling, but the girls and Chuck were up for the challenge. Chuck told the team, "Girls, if we can pull off this win, by the grace of God, I will shave off my mustache." The girls shrieked with excitement, but Alex was a little apprehensive. She had never seen her dad without a mustache. Moments later, the game started. With pressure mounting and the heat rising, the girls battled for every out and every hit. It was the last inning, and the score was tied. The *Monterey All Stars* were up to bat. With two outs and runners on first and third, Chuck decided a squeeze play was the team's best shot for glory. The crowd went wild, tears and sweat rolled down the girls cheeks. They had done it. They won by one run. They had clenched the win and were victorious! The girls grabbed coolers of ice and dumped them on Chuck's head and each other's. One of the dad's, in between games, had run to the store to buy shaving cream and a razor. He ran out on the field, and just as promised, Chuck shaved off his 20-year-old mustache. In Alex's words, "it was a great moment and one I'll remember forever." I think that qualifies for "taking one for the team."

With only a few months to fundraise for the trip to Anaheim, Sandy baked hundreds

of baked potatoes which were sold at every baseball game--Girls Softball, Pony and Bronco leagues—Chuck, Sandy and Alexandria were able to attend. They raised several thousands of dollars to fund the expenses for the hotel rooms, food, and transportation. Chuck accompanied by Sandy drove the rented van to carry all 12 girls to Anaheim, California. While in Anaheim, the team played three games before being eliminated from the World Series. Although disappointed, they made the best of their short stay in the sweltering Southern California heat with a lot of pool time and a visit to Knots Berry Farm.



**Daughter Alex, bottom row second from the left. Coach Della Sala in white.**

Chuck was elected president of Monterey Pony Baseball and served in that capacity for five years. During his tenure as president, Jacks Park in Monterey was revitalized in order to secure an additional five years for the city to host the Bronco League World Series, in which some of the best 11 and 12-year-old baseball players from around the world competed. During that time, the league and the City of Monterey together improved the park. The new snack bar and the added bleachers behind home plate, which provided hundreds of seats, were instrumental factors in keeping Monterey as host of the Bronco World Series for many years thereafter.

While serving as president of Monterey Pony Baseball, Chuck was also a planning commissioner for the city of Monterey and was chairperson of the committee in 1995-1996; his service on the commission spanned a decade, from 1992-2002. His active involvement in community issues eventually brought him acknowledgement from the public. Through it all, Chuck's goal was to make things better for present and future generations. As in all of his life ventures, his driving force was to "leave things better than they were."

With his growing interests in public service, in 2002 Chuck announced his candidacy for a seat on the Monterey City Council. He was elected and served a four-year term as a councilmember.

In November 2006 Chuck was elected mayor of the city and went into high gear working for the citizens of Monterey. Mayor Della Sala proved to be an energetic and an innovative public official; he either led or took part in creating, planning and effecting numerous programs and policies positively impacting the business and residential communities that would carry on for generations to come.



**Congratulations Mayor Della Sala!  
At Colton Hall: father Charlie, son Chas, Sandy,  
Chuck, brother Anthony, mother Rose and sister  
AnnaMarie.**

During his first year in office, with consent from the City Council, Chuck signed the Kyoto Accords, an international treaty promoting reduction of gas emissions contributing to global warming, thus committing the city to improving management and preservation of the local environment. Steps taken toward that goal included buying electric vehicles for the city fleet and electric motorcycles for the police; installing charging stations for electric vehicles, and banning single-use, non-biodegradable containers--in particular, those made of Styrofoam.

Next was the consolidation of fire management services for most of the Monterey Peninsula cities. Chuck headed the task force that sought to achieve better interoperability and cost efficiencies within the various fire departments. The majority of Peninsula mayors and their respective councils agreed with the approach. The result: one chief heads the fire departments that serve Monterey, Pacific Grove, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Sand City, Naval Postgraduate School, La Mesa Village and Monterey Regional Airport. Chuck credits his father, former fire battalion chief, for the fire management consolidation idea.

Chuck was instrumental in the formation of the governance model and served as the first President of the Monterey Peninsula Regional Water Authority and the “Mayors Authority”, that led to the historic negotiations and unprecedented settlement agreement with 15 diverse stakeholders in expediting the California American Water Company’s water project.

For the business community Chuck generated a long-term planning process with extensive public outreach to revitalize the city of Monterey, which culminated in approvals of the Lighthouse Specific Plan, North Fremont Specific Plan, and Downtown Specific Plan. Today, our business districts have wider sidewalks, outdoor seating, more flowers, more lights for increased safety, and mixed-used buildings that are pleasing to pedestrians. Millions of dollars in funding from the hoteliers financed the renovation of the Monterey Conference Center creating a

beautiful, state-of-the-art conference center that the citizens of Monterey can be proud of, serving the local community and visitors from all over the world.

During his tenure as mayor, he led fundraising efforts to repair the city of Monterey's streets, sidewalks, and 100-year-old storm drain system, as well as volunteering his personal time to assist the Measure P Ballot Campaign that passed in the November 2014 municipal election with 74% of the votes. This created an estimated \$32 million in additional sales tax revenue over 4 years for much needed infrastructure repairs and improvements. The city is safer, cleaner and more beautiful as a result.

In 2014 Mayor Della Sala was recognized by the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce as the Public Official of the Year, an award in recognition of exemplary public service and leadership. The mayor was successful in promoting business and improving the local environment at the same time. To quote one of Monterey's most well-known mayors, the Honorable Dan Albert, "Chuck did a hell of a good job in spite of very difficult times with the recession, the fire downtown, and the water issues. Through all the things that happened as a mayor, Chuck always stayed calm, able to keep his composure and articulate his point of view. That was so important." Chuck credits the accomplishments achieved by the City of Monterey under his watch to caring citizens, a terrific staff and a City Council that worked together for the greater good.

In 2015 Chuck was honored by the Italian Heritage Society for his years of outstanding community service.

**Chuck and Sandy at the Italian Heritage Honoree Dinner held at the Monterey Marriott Ferrante Room.**





Chuck is the person you go to if you are looking for an honest, hard- working, down to earth guy, who will pick you up when you are down, and will get the job done. Chuck is the rock in the family, the go to guy--you go to for advice. He puts family first and often asks, "If you don't have family, what do you have?" Chuck has a great work ethic, which comes directly from his parents. Charlie would often say, "you have to be willing to do whatever job it takes to get ahead," and specifically he meant no job is beneath you. So don't be surprised if you see Chuck pitching in and cleaning an apartment to get it ready in time. There is no "better than you" attitude here, or in the family as a whole.

Chuck is very loyal and will stand by you with words of encouragement. When he senses you need a boost emotionally, he is there with all the right words to lift you up. Something he said to me during a moment of crisis that I will never forget was "Don't let anyone make you doubt or forget who you really are. Trust yourself." It was just the encouragement I needed. As I said earlier, he will pick you up when you are down.

Chuck has a great sense of humor and a wonderful infectious whole body laugh. I believe his ability to laugh keeps him healthy and has been a great pressure release in his life. To quote his long-time friend, Richard Singh, "I am truly blessed to have a friend like Chuck in my life, and boy we really make each other laugh." Chuck has the ability to focus on the things that are working, and that puts a smile on his face (a kind of cheshire cat grin), it keeps him going inspite of whatever is still unresolved or not going as well as expected. Chuck does his due diligence in researching prices and negotiating for the "best" deal. When he gets what he wants at a "great price" that puts a smile on his face and a skip in his stride. I would liken it, to hitting a home run in baseball.

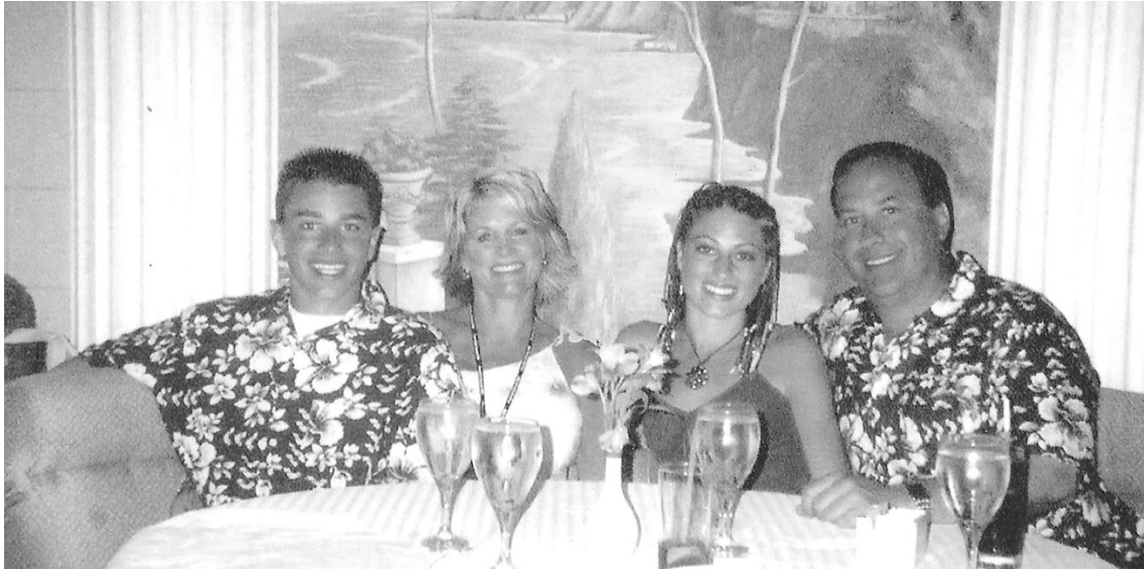
Speaking of baseball---Chuck normally is more quiet than loud, so I was surprised to hear what sounded like yelling and screaming coming from the office. I quickened my step up the stairs and opened the door to Pacific Street Real Estate,

fearing the worst, only to see and hear yells, cheers and laughter coming from Chuck and his son Chas as they were watching the Giants World Series game on the computer. Mild mannered, NOT ALWAYS, all bets are off if he is watching a sports game. Chuck lives a few blocks away from me. During one of the world series games, after a great play, I sent a text to Chuck saying, "I heard you cheering all the way over at my house." He sent a text back, "I bet you did."

Chuck is a softie at heart. Although the rental leases have a late clause, it is a rarity that anyone is actually charged a late fee at Pacific Street Real Estate, Inc. If a renter hits hard times and requests to pay the rent late or in 2 installments, Chuck will bend over backwards to help them out, without charging a late fee.

As Mayor he traveled to Monterey's sister city, Dubrovnik, Croatia. There he was considered a dignitary, and during the visit he was given the royal treatment, and even addressed as "Your Worship." In the evening he called Monterey to talk to his wife Sandy and told her about his day and about being called "Your Worship." Sandy said, "Don't get used to it cause when you get back home, you are still Chuck to me." While in Dubrovnik he received a call from one of the fellows in the Monterey group of visitors. He told Chuck he had packed only one dress shoe and had no other shoes to wear. He asked, "Do you have an extra pair of dress shoes?" Chuck said, "Sure, what do you need black or brown?" The guy was a size 8 and Chuck was a size 9½. No problem, the guy stuffed the shoes with paper and wore them. Now you've heard the expression "some people will give the shirt off their back," well, Chuck gave the shoes off his feet.

I've seen him laugh, I've seen him cry, I've seen him patient, I've seen him impatient, I've seen him grateful and touched by notes and letters of appreciation and gratitude. Chuck loves the City of Monterey and is proud to be a resident. He often says, "I make a living as a businessman; I make my life by giving back to my hometown."



**Chas, Sandy, Alex and Chuck enjoying family time together in Hawaii.**

After retiring from public office, Chuck has continued working full time as the broker of Pacific Real Estate, Inc. As a family man he enjoys spending time with his children, Alex and Chas, and his three grandchildren, Graham, Hudson and Sloane, attending their sports games and sharing family meals, vacations and holidays together.

**ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY HONOREE 2015**