

# Albert “Al” Nicora

1955

ATTORNEY

WRITTEN BY MELANIE NICORA

A second generation Italian American, Al was born and raised in the Temescal area of Oakland, California. He grew up surrounded by his extended Italian family, all living within a few miles of his home. His maternal grandparents came from a region outside Genoa, and his paternal grandparents were from the Piedmont region of northern Italy. His paternal great grandfather came over at the age of 15 and worked in Salt Lake City, Utah, as a dynamiter, then relocated to Berkeley, California, where he helped with the construction of the Caldecott Tunnel.

As a child, Al enjoyed helping his Nonno till the garden, which fed the entire neighborhood. He also helped him raise rabbits and enjoyed caring for and playing with them. It was not until he was much older that he found out his pet rabbits were not escaping but rather the main course at Sunday dinner!



Family at one of the basement parties.

As the first-born son, Al was treated like royalty by his Italian family—especially by his grandmothers, who even peeled his grapes and seeded his watermelon. Fortunately, the nuns at St. Augustine’s grammar school were able to bring him back down to earth.

Both Noni were wonderful cooks, and some of Al's fondest memories are of watching them and the other women in the neighborhood roll their fresh pasta in the basement on Saturday mornings. At night there were basement parties with wonderful food, music and dancing until the wee hours of the morning. Al was so used to the finest Italian cooking at home that once, at a friend's house when the mother served Chef Boyardee ravioli from a can, he politely refused to eat it.

Al's father ran the Albany, California, landfill next to the Golden Gate Fields racetrack. Al has great memories of playing on the site with his brother and watching the giant Caterpillar tractors moving all the debris.



**Al and his brother, Nick Nicora, at the Albany landfill.**

Following middle school, Al was accepted as a boarder at Bellarmine College Preparatory in San Jose, where the Jesuits cultivated in him a lifelong commitment of service to others. He was a four-year letterman in cross country and track, served as student body president his senior year and graduated with the school's highest honor, the Cardinal Bellarmine Award.

Stanford University then welcomed him, where in addition to his studies, he managed to convince six of his buddies that buying a racehorse was a worthwhile investment. Shortly thereafter, the group became known as the ‘Seven Card Studs’ and had procured their racehorse, ‘Our Tuition’. Although not yielding those promised millions, they all had a helluva ride.



**The ‘Seven Card Studs’ and their racehorse, ‘Our Tuition’.**

Stanford was also where he met the love of his life, Melanie. Aware of her Hungarian roots, his grandmothers wasted no time in teaching her the key to Al’s heart and happiness--Italian cooking.

Following graduation in 1977 with a BS in biology, Al attended UC Hastings College of the Law. Melanie proved to be a star student in her Italian cooking ‘courses’, and she and Al tied the knot in 1979. In 1980, much to the shock of his law school roommates, Al passed the bar exam on his first try. He hung his first private shingle in Albany, California and soon after was courted by the law firm of

Boornazian, Jensen & Garth. From there he went to work as assistant general counsel for Pacific Union Company in San Francisco.

In 1984, Al moved the family to the Monterey Bay area and started the law practice of Gilles & Nicora. The firm quickly expanded to Gilles, Nicora, Minor and Sullivan. In 1996, Al's practice became the Nicora Law Offices, and following several transitions, is now on Carmel Rancho Boulevard in Carmel. The firm represents clients in matters of estate planning, probate, trust administration, estate and trust litigation, conservatorships, real estate and general business law. In 2018, after practicing for three years at a Bay Area law firm, Al's third daughter, Jacqueline, was proudly welcomed as an associate and was recently named partner in her father's firm.

Al is also privileged to serve as a California Probate Referee. These judicial officers are appointed by the county Superior Court to appraise decedents' assets in probate cases. Appointed in 1975 by then State Controller Ken Cory, he was the youngest appointee in the history of California and is one of the longest serving to date. Originally appointed to serve in Alameda County, Al was reassigned to Monterey County in 1991. He is most proud that his position allows him to help heirs navigate the complicated probate process, which can be especially difficult after the loss of a loved one. Al has served two terms as president of the Probate Referees Association and is the current editor of the *California Probate Referees Blue Book* and the *California Probate Referees Procedures Guide*.

In addition, Al is a licensed real estate broker and taught real estate courses at Merritt College in Oakland for three years, traveling from Monterey to Oakland and back once a week during that time.

Al's commitment to give back to the community has always been at the forefront of his endeavors both inside and outside of work. He was a longtime member of the Albany Rotary Club, serving as president, then district representative, and was one of the club's first Paul Harris Fellows. For almost 40 years, even after his move to

Monterey, he has headed the Albany Rotary Villa Scholarship awarding nearly \$100,000 to high school seniors who managed to do well in school while overcoming adversities.

One of his greatest joys was serving on the board of directors and then as president of Catholic Charities Diocese of Monterey for more than a decade. During his tenure, the charity was able to cement its financial footing and introduce several new programs to benefit those in need. Al has also served as a board member of Legal Services for Seniors and Montage Health CHI, was an executive committee member of the Monterey County Bar Association, was player hospitality co-chair of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am for ten years and was on the US Open Tournament Committee in 2010. He is also a member of the Colombo Club in Oakland, where his father served as president. Al is proud that his brother, Nick, is now serving in that role. Here in Monterey, Al is a proud member of the Compari and Paisano Clubs.

A devout Catholic, Al is very active in his parish community, the Carmel Mission. At Sunday masses, you may find him ushering or serving as a lector. He is also chairman of the Mission Finance Council, sits on the Carmel Mission Foundation board of directors and is a member of the Knights of Columbus. He served on the school board at Junipero Serra School for several years and was co-president of the parents' club with Melanie. When the school needed a new gym, Al spearheaded the fundraising and permit efforts which culminated in the construction of the Murphy Center.

Al and Melanie have been blessed with four daughters: Stephanie, Catherine, Jacqueline and Maria. During their school years, Al was never too busy for his girls. He was their biggest fan at dance recitals, plays, gymnastic meets, soccer games, equestrian events, track meets and softball games. He is now the proud grandparent of Penelope Midnight, Madison Margaret and Hailey Rose. Yes, all GIRLS. And, despite her cooking a Hungarian dish now and then, Al and Melanie happily celebrated their 42<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary in 2021.



**Left to right: Stephanie Nicora, Jackie Nicora, Al Nicora, Melanie Nicora, Maria Hauman and Catherine Metzner.**

Apart from work, family and community involvement, Al has another love—baseball. Anyone who knows him is well aware of his long-suffering, avid loyalty to the A’s. He has held his Oakland Athletics season tickets for over 40 years, and yes, Melanie and the girls are also fans. In fact, because he wore a jersey with NICORA on the back, attended so many games and entered through the private entrance for season ticket holders, his youngest daughter told everyone in her kindergarten class that her father played for the team.

Al has also found time to complete 30 marathons, get his pilot’s license and go on numerous SCUBA diving trips to unique places such as Palou, the Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Cuba. He has survived swimming with over 300 sharks, a skydiving trip with total chute failure, four days of dog sledding with little snow but lots of rocks and over-excited dogs and rafting down the Merced River with class 5 rapids. While he has also enjoyed trips to China and Ireland, Italy is his favorite destination and he would return there on a moment’s notice.



### **Family A's Game.**

Al loves being Italian. His zest for all that is *Italiano* is infectious, and he shouts to anyone who will listen (or not) that everything Italian is simply the BEST! He was deeply humbled and very proud to have been chosen as a 2021 honoree by the Italian Heritage Society of Monterey.

**ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY HONOREE 2021**