

Gaspar Vincent Cardinale

1935

RETAIL BUSINESSMAN, COMMUNITY SERVICE

WRITTEN BY NELLINA CARDINALE EVANS

Gaspar Vincent Cardinale was born in Palermo, Sicily, to Vincenzo and Nellina Cardinale on February 14, 1935. At the age of three Gaspar moved to the United States with his mother and maternal grandfather, Giuseppe Cardinale. Waiting for them in Monterey was Gaspar's father and extended family.

Gaspar attended Thomas O. Larkin School, Walter Colton and Monterey High School. (Gaspar's wife, Carmela, and their four children attended the same schools.) When he was 10, Gaspar's first job was delivering newspapers from Alvarado Street to where the Naval Postgraduate School stands today. At age 14 he began his career in the shoe business, apprenticing for Raghianti Shoe Repair on Alvarado Street. Gaspar's next job was at Troia's Market when he was



Gaspar at 16 years old.

15. He worked there for over three years, beginning as a stock and delivery boy and finally graduating to the deli department where he made Italian sausage. He still knows the secret recipe for making Troia's delicious Italian sausage.

Although he did not realize it at the time, Gaspar met the love of his life, Carmela DiMaggio, in 1947 when she



Vincenzo and Nellina Cardinale with sons Gaspar and Joseph in 1946.

arrived from Trapani, Sicily, with her family. Their fathers were both local fishermen, and the families were very close. In 1955 Gasper and Carmela began their courtship. Since Carmela's father knew the Cardinales well, he allowed his daughter to date Gasper without a chaperone. After two years of courtship Gasper and Carmela were married at San Carlos Cathedral on October 6, 1957. The following year they welcomed their first son, Vincenzo. Three more children were to follow, twins--Nellina "Nellie" and Josephine--in 1962, and Rocco in 1968.



Gasper and Carmela Cardinale on their wedding day, October 6, 1957.



Carmela and Gasper with first born child, Vincenzo "Vincent" in 1958.

In 1953 Gasper began his hitch with the Navy Reserve, rising to the rank of petty officer second class. In 1961 he was honorably discharged after completing his eight-year term of enlistment.

In 1955 Gasper went to work for James Rowe at the Village Shoe Tree on Ocean Avenue in Carmel. He didn't know it at the time, but he would remain associated with the Village Shoe Tree for the remainder of his business life. After Gasper managed the business for over 12 years, Gasper and Carmela bought the store from Mr. Rowe. Gaining a reputation as a seller of fine shoes and accessories, Gasper's clientele varied; locals, celebrities and visitors from around the world.

In 1977 Gasper and Carmela opened Cardinale Fine Shoes and Carmel Plaza Men's Bootery. Earning a reputation for attention to detail and customer service, Gasper would personally deliver shoes to customers who were unable to come into the store. Over the years three of Gasper and Carmela's children--Vincenzo, Josephine and Rocco--worked in the stores and helped make his businesses a success.



Gasper in Carmel during a community event in 1989.

While managing the shoe stores, Gasper became a member of The Carmel Business Association and was elected to several offices--secretary, vice president and president, which he held for 12 years. He also was a member of Carmel-by-the-Sea Kiwanis Club where he held several offices culminating with a term as president. He often travelled to Salinas to deliver shoes to the underprivileged.

During the holiday season, Gasper was a bell ringer for the Salvation Army. Because of his friendly demeanor and outgoing personality, he was recognized by the Salvation Army as top bell ringer several years running.

Gasper's contributions to community charities continued with his being on the board of directors of the American Cancer Society for five years. He and the other board members were instrumental in helping to create the Cancer Center at Community Hospital. A few years later he was tapped on the shoulder by Superior Court Judge Harpjoon Paik and asked to be a member of the Grand Jury for Monterey County. Gasper accepted and said being a member of the Grand Jury was one of his most enjoyable experiences.

In the early 1990s Gasper and Carmela, along with their sons Vincenzo and Rocco opened Cardinale Coffee Roasting Company in the courtyard behind The Village Shoe Tree. Wanting to expand their business to include soup and sandwiches, Gasper and his sons did battle with an opposing city council and won. They were

grateful to the Carmel residents and customers for their support. If you ever want to get anything accomplished, just tell Gasper it can't be done.

After selling the shoe stores and coffee house, Gasper went into semi-retirement. A short time later he was asked by his cousin Vince Cardinale to manage the specialty shoe department at Ordway Pharmacy. Gasper agreed and worked there part time. During his time at Ordway, Gasper said he had the most fun of his life: He was able to find solutions for people who were having foot problems as well as visit with family and friends who came in to fill their prescriptions. For Gasper, working for Vince Cardinale at Ordway Pharmacy wasn't a job, it was pure joy, and he is forever grateful to Vince for making his time there so special.

Gasper joined the Italian Catholic Federation as a board member rising to the office of vice president. One of Gasper's jobs for the ICF was being a greeter at the Lenten Dinners, which took place in the San Carlos Cathedral parish hall. While San Carlos Cathedral was being renovated, the hall was used for Mass and was not available for the Lenten Dinners. Gasper reached out to the executive officers at the Portuguese Hall and asked if the Lenten Dinners could be held there. Knowing the Lenten Dinners are a gathering place for the community as well as the primary fundraiser for the ICF, he wanted to make sure this tradition continued while the church hall was unavailable. Once again, Gasper had been told it couldn't be done, but he made it a win-win for both organizations. The rental fee that the ICF paid for the use of the Portuguese Hall was donated to the San Carlos Cathedral renovation fund by the Portuguese to fulfill their monetary commitment to the cathedral renovation. Gasper and Carmela also opened-up their home for ICF monthly board meetings during this time.

Most recently, Gasper has spent a lot of time volunteering for the Monterey Elks Lodge, where he was elected to the board of trustees and rose to the position of chairman of the board. Along with his fellow board members, he has been instrumental in updating the Elks' recreational area, security system and parking lot, as well as increasing membership for the Elks Lodge.



Cumming, Georgia, in 2007 celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary with their children. Left to right: Rocco, Nellina, Gasper, Carmela, Josephine and Vincent.

Gaspar was a longtime member of the Festa Italia and the Italian Heritage Society board of directors. He is currently vice-president of the Italian Heritage Society.

One of Gaspar's greatest challenges and accomplishments was establishing Monterey, California, and Isola delle Femmine, Sicily, as Sister Cities. Working closely with Peter Coniglio, Peter Davi, Sal Ferrante, Mayor Clyde Roberson and the Monterey City Council, Gaspar's vision was realized in September of 2017, when a delegation from Isola delle Femmine traveled to Monterey and signed a proclamation making the two cities sisters. Many people had told Gaspar that they had tried to make this happen before and that it couldn't be done. Once again his hard work and dedication to a cause he believed in came to fruition.

On Saturday afternoons Gasper can be found at San Carlos Cathedral as he performs the duties of usher and Eucharistic minister at the 4 p.m. Mass. This is where Gasper gives thanks to God for the many blessings he has been given, starting with his wife, Carmela, his four wonderful children and six grandchildren. Gasper is forever grateful to his parents for leaving a place that they loved in search of a better life in Monterey.

Gasper wants to thank the Italian Heritage Society for being honored for his years of community service



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