

Josephine Billeci Favazza

1931

ACCOUNTANT, ICF TREASURER & FINANCIAL SECRETARY

WRITTEN BY JOSEPHINE FAVAZZA

I was born May 26, 1931, to Joseph and Hattie Billeci in the El Adobe Hospital in Monterey, California, at 602 Abrego Street in what is now known as the Pacheco Club. I am the second oldest of six girls. My father was Italian; his family came from Isola delle Femmine, Sicily, and settled in Crocket, California, where he was born. My mother was English, Welch and one-eighth Creed Indian. Her father was born and raised in Kansas, her mother was born in Jolon, California, and she was born in San Juan Bautista. She grew up in the King City area and often told us stories about her family trips to Monterey that took two days by horse and buggy.

I attended Oak Grove School through fourth grade, then Del Monte School when my parents bought their first home in Del Monte Grove on John Street, then Walter Colton Junior High and on to Monterey High, graduating in 1949.

I met my husband, Joseph Favazza, who had just returned home from the army, when he came to my house with my brother-in-law-to-be for my sister's birthday. I was 15 years old and was asked to cut and serve the birthday cake. When I served Joseph, his slice accidentally slid off the plate and went down his pant leg and onto his shoe. Very embarrassed, I put down the cake knife and left the room. Through the years he heartily enjoyed telling our three sons, our five grandchildren and seven great grandchildren about the day he met me.

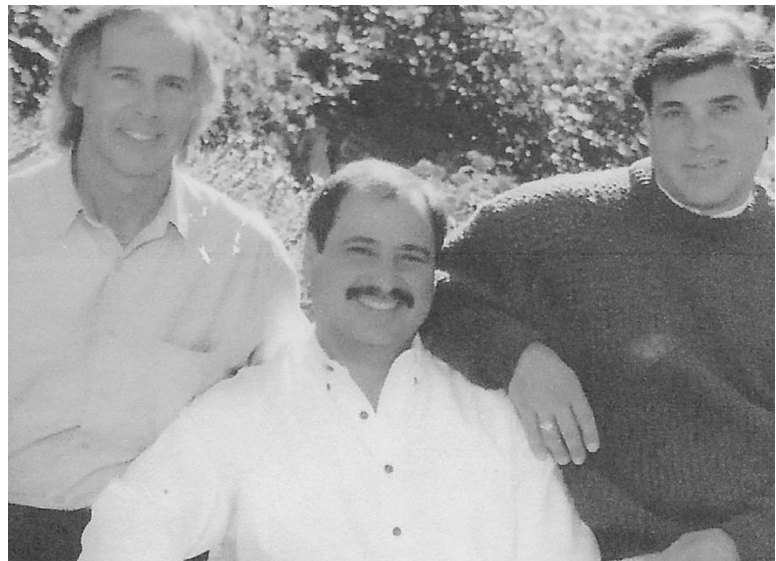
In 1949, my senior year of high school, I was allowed to go downtown after school with my friends instead of taking the school bus home. That was when I met Joseph



again. He was very friendly and never mentioned the cake incident. He told me he was a fisherman on the *Star of Monterey* along with my uncle Neno, but he was hoping to find a different job when the season ended. When I saw him again a few days later, he offered me a ride home. Fourteen months later on December 4, 1949, when I was eighteen-and-a-half, we were married.

Our wedding, December 4, 1949.

I worked in an accounting office during the summers of my junior and senior years of school; and after I graduated and married, I worked full time until my first son, Tom, was born in 1951. I then became a stay-at-home mom. My son Joel was born in 1952, and John was born in 1959. When the boys were in school, I became a room mother and an active PTA member, helping to raise money for special school needs with spaghetti dinners, and was co-chairperson of the Bay View School annual carnival. Along with my husband, I also helped with fundraiser spaghetti dinners for two other peninsula schools and for my granddaughter's youth group



My three sons: Tom, John and Joel Favazza.

at St. Angela Merici Catholic Church in Pacific Grove. Joseph and I were also on the committee that started the Pop Warner football team on the peninsula.

Once the boys were out of grammar school and I had time to myself, I went to Monterey Peninsula College and took income tax and computer classes. During tax season, I enjoyed working part time doing income taxes for a local accountant. I was also my husband's full-time bookkeeper in his construction business and continued in that capacity when he retired in 1984 and turned the business over to our sons. They bought me my first computer. And the professional bookkeeping software I purchased came with a representative to help set it up and get started. It was wonderful; I was in my glory. All the payroll and statements that were done by hand were now done on the computer. When I wasn't doing business work, I spent a lot of time looking up Favazza and Billeci ancestry. My husband was always joking to friends he lost his wife to a computer.

I joined the Italian Catholic Federation in 1983, and within a month I became treasurer when the gentleman with that position was unable to continue due to a serious eye condition and asked me if I would please take over. This was the year the ICF started the Lenten dinners to help pay off the \$100,000 mortgage on the San Carlos Cathedral Parish Hall. Because we brought in more income than the exempt amount allowed non-profits, we had to apply for an ID number, file a nonprofit income tax form, apply for a sales permit and liquor license and file sales tax on bar sales. This was really a full-time job, but when I realized all the apostolic work the ICF did, I agreed to take it on. I was ICF treasurer and financial secretary 13 years until our president died and the vice president was unable to take over. I agreed to take the position temporarily until we could find someone. This temporary position lasted six years. With the help of the wonderful working board, Fr. Joe Occhuito and my husband we were able to continue with all the ICF apostolic work. We initiated the monthly dinner meetings and the 85 and Over birthday party and in the first year brought in 80 new members.

In 2000 I was asked by Central Council Convention Chairman David Botta to be president of our Central Coast district because the ICF convention was going to be held in Monterey in the year 2002. Raoul Bruno became president of the Monterey branch, and I became district president. With participation by all 12 branches of the Central Coast district the convention was well-planned and was a huge success. It is still considered by Central Council as one of the best ever. I served as president of the district for three years.

When the Italian Heritage Society was no longer able to put on the Italian Fisherman's Festival in Monterey, Tom Fama and Carmelo Tringali asked me, Bettye Sollecito and Buster Crivello if we would be interested in helping to organize it. This required a lot of paperwork and had no startup money, but with a few donations from local businesses and an AT &T grant we were able to get it going. We renamed it Festa Italia Fisherman's Festival. In just a few years it went from a one-day festival to a three-day festival, and it grew bigger and more popular each year. I completed all the paperwork--financial statements, sales taxes, income taxes and other required forms for Festa Italia. The IHS is an important organization, because it strives to keep Italian heritage and culture alive. I held positions as treasurer, board member and president.



My husband and I had 63 wonderful years together until he passed away in 2013. We had a busy life but were still able to fit in several vacations. He loved going on cruises and enjoyed the many golf tournaments he played in each year, especially the Italian American Tournament in Las Vegas and the Retired Baseball Players in Palm Springs. My favorite vacation ever was visiting New York and going on the Statue of Liberty.

Acapulco cruise.

This year in May I turned 90 years old. My two sons and daughter-in-law who still live here take good care of me. I still keep up my memberships in the Italian Catholic Federation and Italian Heritage Society but can no longer participate in the activities. I now attend events only as a guest.



Joseph enjoying a round of golf.

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