

# Dan Albert, Sr.

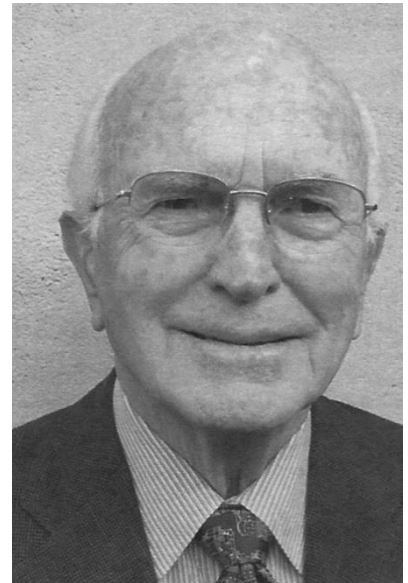
1930

TEACHER, COACH, COUNCILMAN, MAYOR

WRITTEN BY JOE AMELIO

My name is Joe Amelio, proudly married to Dan and Joanne's daughter, Tawny, for 47 years. It gives me great pleasure and honor to write this biography for Dan Albert.

You may wonder why Dan Albert, whose parents came from Spain, would have his story included in a book about Italians who were and are influential in molding the Monterey Peninsula into the vibrant community it is today. Dan qualifies as an "honorary Italian" in many ways, so of course he is a welcome addition to this book. Read on to see how the trajectory of his life brought him to these pages.



**Dan Albert, Sr.**

Dan Albert says he was "conceived in Monterey" by his parents, Caridad and Emilio, but was born in San Francisco. His mother had moved to San Francisco to be with her mother, Wella Navarro, who was a midwife, because she knew she would need help with Dan's birth, which occurred on April 15, 1930. Two months later Dan returned to Monterey, where he remained his whole life.

Caridad's family, the Navarros, emigrated from the village of Casas del Señor, Spain. Emilio's family was from the village of Yecla, Spain—and, incidentally, their surname was Albert, spelled as in English but pronounced differently. Both families traveled around Cape Horn in South America to promised work on the

sugar cane plantations near Hilo, Hawaii, like many other Spanish immigrant families had done before them.

Both families, along with other Spanish and Italian laborers, moved on to wherever there was work to be done—picking fruit in the Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys, performing manual labor in city factories, etc. The Navarro and Albert families eventually ended up in San Francisco, where Caridad and Emilio met and married. Caridad was 16 years old, and Emilio was 24. After their marriage they moved to 1143 Seventh Street in Monterey, in the area known as Oak Grove.

Emilio's brother, Dimas, had a car-painting business in Monterey near where the Stahl Motor Company Mercedes-Benz dealership was. Emilio painted cars with his brother and later opened his own car-painting business in the garage of a Nash dealership. Caridad realized how difficult that business was and saw that Emilio was becoming sick from the paint fumes, so she encouraged him to leave it and do something else. Emilio agreed, and he found work as a custodian at Monterey High School from 1943 to 1961.

Caridad worked as a maid at the Del Monte Hotel, plus put in long hours at San Xavier Cannery on Cannery Row. Dan used to go with his dad to pick up his mother from the cannery, when her long shift ended. He remembers how his mother and her coworkers would leave the building, speaking a mix of English, Spanish and Italian, still energized from their work. San Xavier Cannery no longer exists, of course; it was located close to where the Chart House restaurant is today.

For enjoyment Emilio and Caridad attended a Spanish club where there was socializing and dancing with a lot of immigrants from Spain. This hall was located above Cannery Row where the Sardine Factory restaurant sits today. Dan remembers as a youngster attending those get-togethers at the hall: He and his brothers would go along with their parents, because there were no babysitters at that time!

Dan's older brothers, Nick and Mel, had accompanied their mother to San Francisco to await Dan's birth and attended elementary school there for a few months. Caridad took all the boys back home to 1143 Seventh Street, and later gave birth there to a fourth boy named Ed. When Dan was about ten years old, Emilio and Caridad bought their house at 686 Park Avenue in Oak Grove, where the boys all grew up.

Nick and Mel served in World War II. Mel was injured and survived during the Allied Italian campaign and helped liberate a Jewish concentration camp.

Mel married Frances Aiello. Ed married Lorraine Dorio. Nick married Virginia Meloy, whose father fished for the Monterey Wharf Market. As you may notice, two of Dan's brothers married Italians.

Ed and Nick became well-known and sought-after tile setters. Their tile work is in many houses on the Monterey Peninsula. They even tiled Doris Day's house in Carmel Valley.

Dan attended Oak Grove Grammar School, then Walter Colton Junior High School, where he met Joanne Vout in the seventh grade. Dan borrowed a ruler from her, and that started the romance!

Dan and Joanne both attended Monterey High School, where Dan became a quarterback for the football team. Dan's Italian and Sicilian teammates, many of whom lived on what is known as Spaghetti Hill in North Monterey, were Nick Marotta, Nat Agliano, Vince Maiorana, Joe Acquaviva, Peter Torrente, Bert Aiello, Joe Grammatico, John Anastasia, and his end, Sal Cardinalli. Also on the team were Al Matthews, Bill Krebs and Bob Feliciano. All these connections have lasted through the years. During my interview with Dan, he said these guys were "tough." During the season of 1948-49, they won the league championship. Years later, the *Monterey Herald* would call them "The Team of the Century."

# THE 'BIG GREEN SHIRT'



COURTESY/EL SUSURRO — MONTEREY HIGH SCHOOL 1949 YEARBOOK

These key 13 performers from the 1948 Monterey Union High School varsity football team helped the Toreadores rack up a 7-0 record and outscore their opponents 240-40. MUHS was quarterbacked by current Mayor Dan Albert (63) and coached by John Gardiner.

## **1948 Monterey Union High School Varsity football team, the Toreadores.**

Dan and Joanne also together attended Monterey Peninsula College, where he played football for the Lobos. The same teammates from Monterey High also played with him at MPC, plus other players he knew from Pacific Grove and Carmel. During their second year at MPC, they won the first football championship of Monterey Peninsula College.

Dan transferred to San Jose State University, while Joanne stayed in Monterey and worked with her dad, Murray Vout, who had a car dealership. While at San Jose State University, Dan worked various part-time jobs, even driving a school bus, while he worked toward his teaching credential. When he was a senior at San Jose State University, Dan and Joanne got married. They lived in an apartment in San Jose, where Joanne worked at Bank of America on First Street. Dan received his teaching credential in December 1952, and the couple moved back to Monterey, where Dan student-taught at Monterey High School and coached football.

At Monterey High Dan coached for 28 years, including 23 as head coach of the varsity football team. In that 23-year period his teams won 15 championships and had a winning record percentage of 80 per cent. Nine of his players made it to the NFL, and three played in Super Bowls. Dan also was a successful baseball coach for 16 years. He retired after 38 years of teaching at Monterey High School.

In recognition of all of Dan's accomplishments at the school and his involvement in the community of Monterey, the high school stadium is named Dan Albert Stadium.



**Dan Albert Stadium**

For 14 years Dan and Joanne ran six-week summer camps for both boys and girls. The first was Camp Amigos, which focused on diversity; the second was Camp Cahoon. These camps were all in Carmel Valley, located about a 40-minute drive down Carmel Valley Road. Campers, who were signed up for one- or two-week sessions, slept in barracks-like rooms and participated in activities such as singing, swimming, hiking and crafts. The camp experience emphasized positive elements and provided many exciting adventures for the campers.

Dan and Joanne celebrated their 69<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in September 2021. They have four grown children--Tawny Amelio, Daniel Albert, Jr., Auburn Velasquez and Steve Albert--ten grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren.

Dan became involved civically when he served on the City of Monterey Parks and Recreation Commission for several years; he was also foreman of the Monterey County Grand Jury and a former member and chair of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). After retirement he took on more public duties and was elected to the City Council in 1979. In 1986 he became mayor of Monterey and served in that capacity for 20 years, longer than anyone else in the city's 225-year history. After more than 25 years in public service, Dan Albert retired from his mayoral position in November 2006.

Dan credits his many accomplishments and successes to having employed a team approach involving many players--fellow council members, staff, boards and commissions and many individuals in the community. Another part of his philosophy is what he terms "the delicate balance"--having a strong economic base, while preserving the beautiful environment and history that makes Monterey a great place to work, live and play for its citizens and visitors alike.

He has won numerous awards--including Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year, Public Official of the Year from the Monterey Peninsula Chamber, Italian Heritage Society Honoree in 2017, and in 2018 was awarded with his wife, Joanne, the Monterey Peninsula College President's Award.

Dan Albert served as chairman of the Monterey County Mayor's Association for ten years. He served as chair of the board of directors of the Monterey Regional Waste Management District and on many subcommittees and liaison committees as a representative of the Monterey City Council. He also served as Monterey's representative to the Ft. Ord Reuse Authority. Currently, he is a member of the Monterey Peninsula College Alumni Association, of which he is one of the founding members.

Dan's gift for public speaking has served him well throughout his career in education as well as in community service. He is known for his witty comments and introductions at various events, his easy conversational skills and his ability to lighten a contentious discussion and pave the way to an amicable agreement or decision for a group. During his long tenure on the Monterey City Council as council member and mayor, Dan played a critical leadership role in the economic revitalization of the City of Monterey. When he was first elected to the City Council, Monterey was in economic doldrums. The fishing industry had disappeared, the tourism industry was weak and the military economic activity was being continually threatened.

Under his leadership the City Council and community formulated a new General Plan that has revitalized the community for its residents and provided a diversified economic base that has allowed the city to weather many of the financial crises that have challenged other California cities. Dan helped bring consensus on a plan that revitalized and capitalized on the historic Cannery Row area of the community, transformed the waterfront from looking like a junkyard low-end industrial area to a beautiful expansive park. While on the City Council, he helped create a political environment for the creation of the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium, which has become a keystone of the local tourism industry. Dan has been a prominent leader in the effort to ensure active grassroots political participation by our residents through several programs designed to unite the people who live and work in Monterey with city government.

Dan played a critical regional leadership role in organizing the efforts to challenge Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 1993 and BRAC 1995 in the consideration to relocate the Defense Language Institute and Naval Postgraduate School. He has been a very strong proponent of the City of Monterey in providing municipal services to the local installations to reduce Department of Defense costs.

One of Dan's fondest memories from his time as mayor was a 14-day personal trip to Sicily he took with Joanne in 2000, during which they were able to visit and meet the mayors and citizens of many towns, villages and cities that Dan often heard about from numerous Sicilians and Italian friends. Many travel arrangements for the trip were made by Anita Ferrante, a school friend of Dan's.

When Dan and Joanne arrived by ferry at the picturesque little island of Marettimo in Sicily, they were surprised and delighted to be greeted by a band. Tipped off by Anita Ferrante--whose family hailed from Marettimo and who owned a home and visited extended family yearly--that the mayor of the American town to which numerous citizens from Marettimo emigrated was coming to visit, the whole town turned out to greet them!

They followed the band to the middle of town to a square which was named for Monterey, then walked to a plaza, where food was served, and the whole town was fed! Later, the mayor of Marettimo brought Dan and Joanne to a museum, where he showed them a panoramic picture of the whole town and said that half of the town's people had moved to Monterey, California.





Two days later, when Dan and Joanne were scheduled to leave the island, they had more excitement, but of a different kind. Mother Nature sent a huge storm with crashing waves, endangering the usual ferry transportation to the mainland. A larger boat was brought in, and even at that, the turbulent water was almost to the windows. When the perilous trip ended, all the passengers applauded the captain for making it through the storm!

Dan and Joanne also went to the Sicilian town of Isola delle Femmine, where they were greeted with a ceremony in the town square, attended by the entire town. The mayor said they even closed the school that day to greet them.

Erasmus Aiello, owner of Seaside's Palermo Bakery and a wonderful singer, was born and raised in Isola delle Femmine, where his father owned a bakery. Dan and Joanne went to the bakery and met Bert Cutino's cousin. Bert, an actively involved member of the Monterey community and co-owner of the Sardine Factory restaurant and the Cannery Row Company, arranged for the meeting. On September 8, 2017, Isola delle Femmine and Monterey became sister cities.



**Isola delle Femmine,  
Ristorante Cutino**



**Dan, Joanne and Bert Cutino's cousin at  
Ristorante Cutino.**

Dan and Joanne also met and visited the mayor of Palermo, Leoluca Orlando, at his villa in the center of Palermo.

Dan found Leoluca to be a dynamic person who had made progressive moves with everything from the judicial to the governmental in Palermo. Mayor Orlando is still mayor of Palermo. Dan felt the close connection that exists between Monterey and Sicily and extended a heartfelt invitation to Leoluca to visit Monterey one day soon.



**Dan with Sindaco (Mayor) di Palermo, Leoluca Orlando.**

Mr. Dan Albert  
Mayor of Monterey  
Monterey  
USA - California 93940

Dear Mayor,

*it is a joy for me to learn that your staying here in Palermo and Sicily was an enjoyable one.*

*Thank you for being here with us and for the kind invitation to the surely marvelous Monterey, and which I would be very pleased to visit one day.*

*with best greetings*

*(Leoluca Orlando)*  
Leoluca Orlando

*Il Sindaco di Palermo*

**Thank you letter from the Mayor of Palermo.**

With all Dan's connections to Italy--growing up in Monterey surrounded by Italians; playing on the winningest teams with Italian teammates; having two Italian sisters-in-law, not to mention a handsome and dashing Italian son-in-law; faithfully attending all local Italian events both officially and unofficially, and being feted and honored by the people and mayors of towns he visited in Sicily and Marettimo—he has certainly earned his “Honorary Italian” title and entry in a book about influential Italians who contributed to life in Monterey. But that status was truly and finally solidified when in 2017 he was selected by the Italian Heritage Society to be honored for his contributions to the Monterey community. He is a rare specimen—only one of two non-Italians ever to be awarded this honor from the IHS!

Dan's Italian connections have enriched his life, and he in turn has endowed theirs with a solid friendship. As he puts it, “Italians have always been a part of my life!”

**ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY HONOREE 2017**