



Paul Giamona

Paul Giamona was born in Monterey, CA in 1944 to Agatha and John Giamona, both working class Italians from the area. His father was a commercial fisherman and was often away from home fishing. Agatha worked in the canneries along Cannery Row. Paul had one brother, Mariano and one sister, Francine – all born and raised like many others, here in Monterey on Pacific Street. Service ran in his family. His grandmother Francesca Giamona was one of the founders of the Santa Rosalia festival in the 1930's. His life, since childhood, has been dedicated to his community – beginning in his youth, serving as an altar boy from sixth through eighth grade at San Carlos elementary. Up early, assisting the clergy during 6:30 mass, is where it all began.

He continued on to Junipero Memorial High School where he excelled athletically and academically. Throughout his teenage years, his service continued where he volunteered and was twice voted class president, was active in a variety of sports, and was selected as the recipient of a Boys State award given by the American Legion and one of the most respected educational programs of government instruction for US high school students where students participate in the operation of local and state government. When most teenagers were focused on hanging out

socially, Paul chose to participate in this mock government activity - a foreshadowing of his life to come as a civics teacher.

Beyond his school achievements, like many true Italians in Monterey, Paul had family connections. His uncles, Turk Archdeacon, and Sam Solis, worked at Cypress Point golf course in Pebble Beach and helped him launch his golf career as a caddy at the famed golf course. During his senior year Henry Puget the pro at Cypress Point, suggested he apply for the Chick Evans Scholarship sponsored by the Western Golf Assn out of Chicago. To qualify, caddies must meet the requirements of having a strong caddie record, excellent academics, demonstrated financial need and outstanding character. Meeting all of these requirements, Paul was awarded a full tuition and housing scholarship to UC Berkeley. Not only was this a huge accomplishment coming from a modest Italian fishing family in a small town, but he became the first person in his family to go away to college.

At Berkeley, Paul received his bachelor's degree in finance and then continued on to get his MBA at USC. In 1966 he married Kathleen Catania. While living in Los Angeles they had their first child, Karinne, in 1968 and then in 1975 they had another daughter named Maya. Paul was involved in the initial development of Calabasas Park in Los Angeles as an accountant for the Bechtel Corporation, but decided the corporate world was not for him. He felt unfulfilled and wanted to pursue another career path - one in education and service. He went back to school and attended Cal State Hayward to get his master's degree and teaching credential in history because this is where Paul felt he could make a difference in the world.

From there he moved with his family back to Monterey to become a high school history teacher at Monterey High School. This was where his true impact on the Monterey Peninsula soared over the next 35 years. He not only became one of the most beloved history, civics, and economics teachers, but he continued his acts of service remaining actively involved in leading student and faculty events that made him well-respected and appreciated by thousands of people. Over the decades, he served as the faculty advisor for the Keywanettes, volunteered for years as the teacher chaperone for the Senior Disneyland trip, and often chaperoned the prom and other school dances. He was one of the co-chaperones for the annual Close-Up trip to Washington DC for many years. This involved not only attending the trip

for the week, but it involved coordinating all of the student fundraising and logistics. Service and participation in his school community was central to his being.

Because of his involvement, Paul, now called Mr. G by the students, was known to be an in-demand teacher. Everyone loved his class and liked to be around him. Even students that did not do well in his class appreciated and respected him. He was kind, personable and approachable to all students from all walks of life. At lunch time, he left his door open and kids that did not quite “fit in” congregated in his room to discuss current events and politics. He made everyone feel welcome and that they belonged.

Paul also loved the game of basketball and served as the JV basketball coach for Monterey High for many years. Once again, he was not only just a coach, but often a mentor and friend to the athletes on his team. At the end of many seasons, he hosted slumber parties or backyard gatherings at his house where all of the boys on his team were invited to hang out, eat, and celebrate together.

In 1987, Paul demonstrated one of the ultimate testaments of service beyond being a coach and teacher. One night a member of his basketball team, Tim Sherman, called Jerry, his new wife, and said he needed a place to stay for a few nights. Paul and Jerry welcomed him into his home without hesitation. Tim stayed for more than a few nights. The few nights turned into years, as he lived there until he graduated high school and became a true member of the Giamona family over the rest of his life. The fact that Tim felt comfortable enough to approach his basketball coach and teacher is just one pivotal experience that exemplifies the impact Paul had on his students' lives. The number of lives Paul has touched throughout his years as a teacher is profound. To this day, it is hard to walk around town and not hear, “hey, Mr. G!” and then hear people's stories on how he affected their lives. Stories that include how he influenced them to become teachers themselves, stories of how he made them feel included when others did not, stories on how he taught them to enjoy history or economics, and simply stories about how he was just an all-around cool guy.

Parallel to serving his students, Paul dedicated his time advocating and helping his teaching peers and later the general community, as well. He held several positions including Treasurer, Vice President, and President of the Monterey Bay Teachers Association (MBTA) –working to improve job fairness and rights of his fellow teachers. Although his main dedication was teaching, he still had a passion for accounting. As a result, he started his own tax and accounting business to help. Paul helped local small businesses in the community by doing their books and payroll. These included Rosine’s, Sly McFly’s, and Gene’s Auto Body. Additionally, he prepared tax returns for hundreds of people – a service he still provides today. If you ask him why he did all of this, he will tell you, “I just want to help people.”

Now in retirement, Paul continues to devote his time and energy towards several social community groups in Monterey. He still consults MBTA with its accounting and finance matters, coordinates a Wednesday golf group where he arranges tee times, money, and secures locations for the weekly game. He also helps coordinate yearly out-of-town golf outings. Additionally, he is a member of the Amici group and opens, sets up, makes coffee, and makes weekly breakfast in the city community room at the Custom House Plaza. Paul also coordinates locations, menu choices, raffle prizes, and all logistics for the dinner events of the Compari Club of Monterey. Lastly, he is a member of the Paisano club and participates in their periodic dinners. Paul has remained service-centered throughout his entire life. He continues to help and serve others even when other men use their retired years to focus on themselves. If you ask him why he volunteers his services, he says: “It is simple. I enjoy being with people and I want our community to stay connected. What is more important than friends and family?”