



Be an active member of the Dante Club in 2025

DANTE'S INFERNO



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Pat Orelli

Dante Club mourns loss of another member and friend

It is a sad time for all of us. Our oldest longtime member, Ottavio Luchini, died Friday, Jan. 17. He joined the club on March 10, 1952, and continued as an active member and life member. He even had made his reservation for the January members meeting.

We celebrated Ottavio's 99th birthday last year. He will be greatly missed.

Crab, pasta and salad were plentiful and tasty at our Dante Club crab feed on Saturday, Jan. 18. We had wonderful entertainment with many songs of the 1950s and 1960s by Italian singers.

There was a raffle with a twist: In the order that a ticket was pulled, the winner got to select what they won from among the prizes offered. The number of people attending

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SOMETHING FISHY'S IN THE WORKS

Board member Mark Pedroncelli, left, enlists his gondolero skills to stir risotto for the Dante Club's annual cioppino dinner last year. The event, now in its 12th year, will return March 15, with the centerpiece Italian fish stew prepared by executive chef Michael Talani and a work crew of men's club and Women's Auxiliary members. Originating in San Francisco in the late 1800s, cioppino was born when Italian immigrant fisherman would share their bounty of clams, crabs, mussels, cod and shrimp at the end of their fishing day. Italian restaurants along Fisherman's Wharf soon made the dish popular. Dancing and a raffle will be included in this year's March 15 event. Cost is \$80 per person. More details and reservation information will be available soon on the club website.

Community icon left his mark with nearly a century of love and service

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Ottavio Luchini, born May 18, 1925. He left this world peacefully at his home at age 99 on Jan. 17, 2025.

Ottavio was a member of the Dante Club for over 72 years—the longest tenure of any member. He served on the board in the 1960s and was a faithful attendee at club events. He also participated in other area organizations, including Piemonte Reale, Romulus Club, Lion's Club and the Italian Golf Club.

Ottavio met Elsa Mazzon in the summer of 1951, and they married in September 1952, ultimately celebrating 69 years together.

Elsa died on April 21, 2020, during the COVID-19 shutdown. Because she was never given a proper farewell at that time, a joint funeral for the couple will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at St. Mary's Church, 1333 58th



Ottavio Luchini

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NEWS, NOTES AND OTHERWISE

General manager's report

In January, the Dante Event Center welcomed back monthly groups, including SIR (Sons in Retirement) Branch 23, and annual groups, such as the Sacramento Wheelmen and the Construction Industry Education Foundation, which held its annual crab feed at another location with over 550 guests. We look forward to the return of other crab feeds from Valley Industrial Claims Association, NorCal Center, the Building Owners and Managers Association and the Sierra Nevada chapter of Meeting Professionals International.

Thanks to all who participated in the Dante Club crab feed on Jan. 18. Ron Davis provided entertainment, and a raffle offered some great prizes.

The Dante Club will have its Sunday Family Dinner on March 9 and a cioppino feed on March 15. We're working closely with members to build a fun events calendar for the year to potentially include quarterly wine dinners, a murder mystery event, a casino night and a pasta sauce competition.

The Dante Event Center is booking into 2026. See Page 9 for details of the member discount for bookings.

Ongoing reminders: The Sunday Family Dinner price is now \$22 for adults and \$12 for children. Members dinners are \$25. In addition, reservations for Sunday and members dinners are due by midnight Fridays rather than Saturdays. Reservations for Women's Auxiliary dinners are due by midnight Thursdays.

Advisory and finance

We continue to take small steps toward implementing changes in our financial support efforts.

The financial oversight committee now has four people who will begin to better see what we're spending and to suggest to the board what might be done better.

Joe Pasquinelli and John Apostolo have volunteered. Tina Bowers and Alyse DeFazio from the Women's Auxiliary are sharing the third spot. If they think this committee needs to expand, we will consider that.

This leaves us with Joe wearing two hats (really three; read below). Joe is also the club treasurer. We're asking any member who can spend time monthly to review and approve club expenditures to consider taking

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UPCOMING EVENTS
Call 916-925-8230 or reserve and pay online at:
danteclub.com/members-event-calendar/

February 2

Sunday Family Dinner

Times: 4 p.m. cocktails, 5 p.m. dinner

Menu: Italian sausage and vegetable soup, chicken marsala with asparagus risotto, seasonal vegetables, garlic focaccia breadsticks and chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$22 adults, \$12 children age 12 and younger

Reservations are closed.

February 10

Women's Auxiliary Members Dinner and Meeting

Times: 4:30 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner

Menu: Italian green salad, veal Parmesan with spaghetti, herb-roasted zucchini and squash, dinner rolls with butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$25 for members, \$30 for guests

Reserve by midnight Thursday, Jan. 30.

February 17

Dante Club Members Dinner and Meeting

Times: 6 p.m. cocktails, 7 p.m. dinner, followed by meeting

Menu: Italian chopped salad, herb-roasted pork loin with penne alla vodka, roasted asparagus, garlic herb-roasted focaccia breadsticks, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$25 per member

Reserve by midnight Friday, Feb. 7.

March 9

Sunday Family Dinner

Times: 4 p.m. cocktails, 5 p.m. dinner

Menu: Green pea soup with crispy prosciutto, beef and cheese ravioli with Parmigiano, seasonal vegetables, garlic herb-roasted focaccia breadsticks and chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$22 adults, \$12 children age 12 and younger

Reserve by midnight Friday, Feb. 28.

March 10

Women's Auxiliary Members Dinner and Meeting

Times: 4:30 p.m. cocktails, 6 p.m. dinner

Menu: Irish flag clementine cucumber salad, braised corned beef, cabbage, roasted carrots, boiled Yukon potatoes, dinner rolls with butter, chef's choice dessert

Cost: \$25 for members, \$30 for guests

Reserve by midnight Thursday, Feb. 27.

**News, Notes and Otherwise**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

on that role. Our bookkeeper receives all bills and prepares them for payment. Our general manager is responsible for Dante Event Center approvals, and the club treasurer is responsible for any club expenses.

We don't want to overwork Joe, so we ask any members who can donate time monthly to please talk to any board member. We overworked Tom Mezzanares for years, and we don't want to do that to Joe or anyone else again.

But that means we need help, involvement, time—fill in the blank. Joe is also filling in as secretary, Tom is filling in as our newsletter coordinator (bless you, John Caselli). Having two people in a role could provide continued support to keep us from needing to find someone quickly.

Ever wanted to sit in a meeting and record the proceedings? We have a job. Joe volunteered to cover the vacated secretary position before we nudged him into the financial side.

Ever wanted to publish a newsletter that goes out to hundreds—or it might be 1,000 by now? We have contributors and support, but we need a coordinator.

We ask all members to please consider helping out a bit more or to suggest someone who might be an asset to the club. Give us the suggestion, and we'll twist their arm—for all of us.

Newsletter advertising

Tom Mezzanares, vice chairman of the Dante Club

publicity committee, and the board thank our monthly *Dante's Inferno* advertisers.

Anyone interested in advertising in the newsletter in 2025 can email Tom at tjmezzan@gmail.com.

Bocce update

In preparation for the spring bocce season, the bocce committee will meet at 5 p.m. Feb. 17, followed by a general meeting at 5:30 p.m. for team members and prospective players. Scheduling and season activities will be discussed. This year the club will offer play on Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings.

Scholarship program

High school seniors who will graduate in June should mark March 31 on their calendars. That's the deadline to apply for a Dante Club scholarship.

Students can obtain information on the Dante Event Center website at <https://danteclub.com/scholarship%20info/> or pick up applications at the center.

Applicants must include with their application their grade-point average, at least two letters of recommendation, a personal essay and a list of activities in which they've participated during their high school years.

Students with questions can email Richard Battistessa at drbattistessa@comcast.net.

Social report

We're off to a great start for 2025. Thanks to all members who participated in the Dante Club's annual crab feed in January. A good time was had by all.

We're ramping up for more exciting special events this year. We've scheduled a cioppino feed in March and are planning a casino night for June. A pasta sauce competition was canceled this month but will be rescheduled if interest prevails. Members have proposed other events as well.

Keep the ideas coming. Group participation is fundamental to our club. Thanks to everyone who has participated so far this year.

Buildings and grounds

During January, several members showed up over several different days to help with various projects. These included touch-up painting; cleaning of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning vents; repair of a few lights in the Venetian Room; and door-frame rebuilding for the storage closet.

We also installed new mounts for additional security cameras that will soon be installed. Lastly, the crew added seat cushions and touch-up paint to many dining room chairs.

Special thanks go to all who helped with these projects: Don Agostinelli, Jim Brennan, Mark Caso, Steve DeCristofaro, Steve Lavezzo, Matt Longo, Tom Mezzanares, Paul Pane, Ron Pane, Joseph Pasquinelli and George Procida.

Membership

January was a rough patch for the club's membership. Ottavio Luchini and John Caselli passed away to start our year. Both were ever-present attendees at our events.

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2025 Committees and Assignments

COMMITTEES

ADVISORY AND FINANCE

Dan Calcagno, chairman; Ron Pane, vice chairman

Members: Tom Mezzanares, Richard Battistessa, George Procida, Tom Novi, Pat Orelli, Joseph Pasquinelli

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

George Procida, chairman; Don Agostinelli, vice chairman

Members: Matt Longo, Tom Mezzanares, Joe Porata, Ron Pane, Bill Maffei

BYLAWS

Ron Fiorica, chairman; Tom Novi, vice chairman

Member: Steve DeCristofaro

MEMBERSHIP AND INVESTIGATIONS

Dan Calcagno, chairman

Members: George Procida, Don Agostinelli, Dennis Noble, Tom Mathews

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

Open position, chairman; Tom Mezzanares, vice chairman

SCHOLARSHIP

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Member: Mark Pedroncelli

SOCIAL

Steve DeCristofaro, chairman; Rich Battistessa, vice chairman

Members: Matt Longo, Joe Porata, Ron Pane, Mark Pedroncelli

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

BOCCE

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Members: Frank Bartucco, Nick Canepa, John Rizzardo

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Frank Buccola, chairman

Members: Bill Maffei, Rich Battistessa, Frank Bartucco

DINNER PROGRAM

Rich Battistessa, chairman; Jim Dimino, vice chairman

Member: Don Agostinelli

ENHANCING OUR ITALIAN CULTURE

Ralph DiLibero, chairman

Member: Rich Battistessa

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

- Women's Auxiliary liaison: Tom Novi
- Check-in desk for club events and raffle: Open position, chairman; Matt Longo, vice chairman; and new members
- Club apparel: Mark Pedroncelli
- Sergeant-at-arms: Colin Orelli

2024-2025 DANTE CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

- Patrick Orelli, president: pat@apcpagroup.com, 916-369-2327
- Dan Calcagno, first vice president: dmcalcagno@aol.com, 916-481-8368
- Ron Pane, second vice president: repane@icloud.com, 916-798-0111
- Joseph Pasquinelli, secretary and treasurer: jmpasquinelli@gmail.com, (708) 805-5242

DIRECTORS

- Richard Battistessa: drbattistessa@comcast.net, 916-961-4854
- Steve DeCristofaro: stefanodad@gmail.com, 916-752-3247
- Jim Dimino: jkdimino@sbcglobal.net, 916-956-6691
- Ron Fiorica: rbfiorica@frontiernet.net, 916-687-6406
- Matt Longo: longomb@sbcglobal.net, 916-397-5869
- Bill Maffei: mrmaffei@sbcglobal.net, 916-207-6837
- Tom Mezzanares: tjmezzan@gmail.com, 916-752-7443
- Brian Noble: ibnoble@gmail.com, 916-217-8836
- Dennis Noble: d.noble35@comcast.net, 916-889-6677
- Tom Novi: tomnovi@aol.com, 916-961-6197
- Mark Pedroncelli: peddc@surewest.net, 916-812-6729
- George Procida: gprocida@gplandscape.com, 916-455-4738



Auxiliary grows as members recruit friends to join

As I sat home recovering from my knee replacement, I found that I really missed seeing my auxiliary women at the January meeting. This club has become a very special part of my life.

But applications continue to pour in, and I'm proud to say that our membership is now at 278 women. We must be doing something right, as our members keep inviting their friends to join.



WOMEN'S AUXILIARY NEWS

Debra Cattuzzo

Auxiliary vice president Alyse De Fazio conducted the January meeting and introduced a couple of new members: Lisa Lanterman, daughter of member Marilyn Cottini, and Sienna Sapienza-Boundy, daughter of member Diane Saienza-Boundy and

granddaughter of member Margaret Sapienza.

Raffle prize winners were Catherine Raineri-Zerio, Hostess with the Mostest gift basket; Bianca Ferri, \$25 cash; guest, self-care gift basket; Kathy Traversi, Leatherby's \$25 gift card; Barbara Relles, Inspire gift basket; Julia Noto, \$20 Peet's gift card; Marilyn Ricci, Paesano's \$25 gift card; Harriett Lamanna, Jay's Honey;

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Continuing their tenure as longtime dedicated leaders of the Women's Auxiliary are 2025 auxiliary officers, from left, Tina Luchini Bowers, treasurer; Susan Kasimatis, secretary; Debra Cattuzzo, president; and Alyse De Fazio, vice president.



Lined up and ready to fulfill the duties of the Women's Auxiliary board of directors for 2025 are, front row from left, Adrienne De Fazio, caller; Alyse De Fazio, vice president; Donna O'Neil, caller; and Tina Luchini Bowers, treasurer. Joining them, back row from left, are Marie Waldron-Booth, historian; Susan Kasimatis, secretary; Anna Tenderella, hospitality; Kathy Holberton, caller; Debra Cattuzzo, president; and Carole Stefani-Meyers and Karol Buccola, past presidents. Not pictured are callers Roseann Jamison and Nancy Doyle.

2025 WOMEN'S AUXILIARY BOARD

- Debra Cattuzzo, president: cattuzzod@gmail.com
- Alyse DeFazio, vice president: alysedefaz@aol.com
- Tina Luchini Bowers, treasurer: tebowers55@gmail.com
- Susan Kasimatis, secretary: sjk955@gmail.com
- Anna Tenderella, hospitality: annatenderella46@gmail.com
- Karol Buccola, past president: karolrb55@gmail.com
- Adrienne DeFazio, trustee/caller: adefazio73@gmail.com
- Nancy Doyle, trustee/caller: ncdoyle59@gmail.com
- Kathy Holberton, trustee/caller: crystalgal@yahoo.com
- Roseann Jamison, trustee/caller: rosieado@yahoo.com
- Donna O'Neil, trustee/caller: rta4005@gmail.com



Auxiliary

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and Silva Cioli, free dinner.

Thanks to these members who brought in aluminum can pull-tab donations: Suzie Rozewski, Tina Bowers and Cathy Bertolani.

Their contributions will be added to the large amount of pull tabs we'll present to the men's club for donation to the Ronald McDonald House charity.

Our bingo winners in January were Liane Leavitt and Chloe Leavitt. There were two other winners, but their signatures were illegible on the sheet.

Of course, our Dante Club olive oil was once again on sale, and several members purchased some. We have quite a bit available, and it will be for sale until we run out.

Icon

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St., Sacramento. Afterward, a joint celebration of life will be held from noon to 3 p.m. at the Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd., where funny stories and heartfelt reminisces will be encouraged.

Ottavio will be missed by the many people he encountered throughout his 10 decades of life. He leaves his greatest legacy—his family—as forever better people for having experienced his quirky actions, modesty, Italian hospitality and humble friendliness.

Ottavio is survived by his children, Romano (Cris), Tina (Bob), Eric (Suzan) and Lisa (Frank); his grandchildren, Eric (Bekki), Zachary (Annie), Kyle, Ryan (Wendy) and Jazzy; and his great grandchildren, Ethan, Charlotte, Brinley and Blakely.

Ottavio passed on a legacy of love for the Dante Club to some of his family members. Son Eric (Eric) Luchini is a 35-year member and past board member and president; son Romano and grandchildren Eric and Zachary were members for many years; and daughter Tina serves as treasurer of the club's Women's Auxiliary.

To read the full obituary for Ottavio Luchini or send a sympathy card to the family, go online at <https://www.gormleyandsons.com/obituaries/ottavio-luchini>. The obituary also is available here: <https://danteclub.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Ottavio-Luchini-Obituary-Final.pdf>.



Happily puffing on a favorite cigar was the signature look of longtime Dante Club member Ottavio Luchini.

President's Corner

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was far less than in the prior year.

The February Sunday Family Dinner on Feb. 2 will feature Italian sausage and vegetable soup, chicken marsala with asparagus risotto, seasonal vegetables, garlic focaccia breadsticks and dessert.

These monthly dinners are always enjoyable. Few members attend, but those who do seem to bring lots of friends, as we are almost always at capacity.

More member participation would certainly be welcome, however. Members should make their reservations early.

We had planned a first-ever pasta sauce cook-off for members on Feb. 8, but we've had to cancel it. The competition would have featured tastings of members' favorite family sauce recipes and voting for the best.

We hope to reschedule this event for a future date, pending member participation.

Our membership in the Dante Club has changed since Ottavio joined in 1952. The club is no longer the primary social activity for Italian immigrants. Most of our members are second-, third- and even fourth-generation Americans.

We join the club because we have an interest in our Italian heritage and enjoy sharing it. If the Dante Club is to survive long-term, we need member participation in our club events.



Candied orange peel a must to keep on hand

At this time of year, many Sacramento residents still have navel oranges on their backyard orange trees, making this a great time to prepare a stash of homemade candied orange peels—or *scorze di arance candite*—to keep in the fridge or freezer.

These peels are an authentic and essential ingredient for sweets from all over *lo stivale* (the Italian boot), such as panforte from Siena, panettone from Milan, sfogliatelle from Naples and cannoli from Sicily. They also can be added to biscotti or enjoyed like candy, as my grandkids do, either plain or dipped in melted dark chocolate.

This method for preparing candied orange peels is easier than others because the pith of the peels—the white spongy part of an orange between the peel and the flesh—isn't removed.

CANDIED ORANGE PEELS

Ingredients:

- 3 large or 4 small navel oranges, organic and unsprayed

JUST LIKE MOM USED TO MAKE

Adrienne DeFazio

(oranges with thick peels work better than those with thin peels)

- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup superfine sugar, for coating peels

Directions:

Rinse and dry oranges. Use sharp knife to slice top and bottom off each orange. Make vertical cuts, about an inch apart, from top to bottom of each orange. Cut through the orange peel and pith but not the flesh. Pull off segments of the peel from the orange. If some flesh remains on peel, pull it off and discard or save for eating. Cut peel segments vertically into ¼-inch-wide strips.

Put peel strips in medium saucepan and cover them with water so the water level is about an inch above the peels. Bring water to boil and simmer peels over low heat, stirring occasionally, for about 45 minutes. Drain peels in a colander. Place a wire cooling rack on top of a rimmed baking sheet. If desired, line

baking sheet with wax paper or parchment paper.

Combine granulated sugar and 2 cups of water in same saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring mixture to boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add drained orange peels, and reduce heat to low. Cook peels, stirring from time to time, for 45 minutes to an hour, until they're tender.

When done, peels will have absorbed most but not all of the syrup. Use slotted spoon to transfer peels to wire rack, separating them so they don't touch each other. Let peels dry for one to two hours before coating them with sugar. Peels will still be slightly tacky, which will help the sugar adhere. To coat peels, put ½ cup superfine sugar into a quart-size bag. Use less sugar if bag is smaller. Add 4 or 5 orange peels to bag and shake bag until peels are coated evenly with sugar. Return peels to wire rack, keeping them separate. Continue coating all peels with sugar, adding more

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Just Like Mom

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sugar if necessary. Let peels dry on rack overnight,

turning them over once or twice. Transfer to storage containers with lids or food-storage bags.

This recipe makes about 2 cups of candied orange peels, depending on the size of the oranges.

Additional notes:

- Use leftover syrup for sweetening tea, coffee or cocktails. It should last for a week or two in the refrigerator.
- Use leftover superfine

sugar for sweetening beverages or baking.

- Use leftover orange flesh for snacking, in salads or for juice.
- In lieu of superfine sugar, granulated sugar can be pulsed in a food processor or blender to a fine, not powdery, consistency. A clean coffee grinder also works well.

These peels keep very well in the freezer, so they're always on hand for Italian baking needs.

Based on my experience, they can last as long as two years if they're stored in an airtight container in the freezer.

Request for information

As we mark this year's 100th anniversary of the Dante Club, we are seeking information about our history.

Beginning in March and continuing through December, we will feature articles in the newsletter focusing each month on a decade of our club history, starting with the 1920s, the decade of our founding.

Marie Booth, the Women's Auxiliary historian, will gather and assemble the articles for us, but we need help.

We ask members who, over the years, might have saved old newspaper clippings, newsletters, photos or other Dante Club-related memorabilia that they're willing to share to please let us know. Even Dante Club stories and memories that aren't written down can be shared, and we will prepare them.

Members who have something to share or questions about this project should contact Marie at bmbooth@aol.com or 916-715-5756. They also can email Tom Mezzanaras at tjmezzan@gmail.com.

Thanks for helping us recall and celebrate our club's many great stories and memories over a century of Italian American camaraderie and friendship.

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News, Notes and Otherwise

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Ottavio had been a member since 1952. John was the *Inferno* newsletter coordinator and our welcome man at members dinners.

We now stand at 229 members, with an additional 20 lifetime members. I do need to correct a name misspelling for our most recent addition. Matt Campanella joined our ranks in December and got his badge in January. We encourage members to greet Matt when they see him.

At the January meeting, we interviewed Andrew Varanelli, sponsored by Roy Jones. A second-generation Italian with family from the Naples area, Andrew came to the Sacramento area after his early life in New Jersey. A retired teacher, he has crossed paths with several of our members in the school system.

The membership committee found Andrew to be a good fit for

the club, and the general membership unanimously voted him in. We hope to induct him at this month's meeting.

Also in February, we plan to interview Frank Valente, who is sponsored by Nick Canepa. Frank, retired from the Navy and a current Realtor, was a last-minute scratch for a January interview. To his great credit, he called everyone he could find to tell us he needed to reschedule. We will see him next month.

We have no applications on our waiting list, but six people have shown interest. We will schedule them to chat soon.

Applications are available on the Dante Club website, in the office or from the committee.

Ten days before the end of January, 177 of our 229 members had paid their 2025 dues. We always have a late-arriving crowd, but we ask the tardy to please renew. We are sensitive to

members' reaction to the additional assessment this year but believe it's needed to keep our club financially healthy.

Considering the facility we own, the social events we sponsor and the Italian culture we promote, we think \$150 is not a significant deterrent to membership.

If it is for some members, however, we ask that they please let us know, and we will try to make arrangements.

We also ask all members for greater involvement when possible. In 2024, the club held 29 social activities, including dinners, bocce competitions and special events—and, honestly, we had mixed attendance results.

Awhile ago, we began a review of who attended and who did not.

Of the 12 members dinners, including the summer barbecues, 92 members did not attend any. Of our 29 total events, 79 members

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Want to book a personal event? Don't delay

The Dante Event Center is booking into the 2026 event season. Any club members interested in hosting a personal event at the center should inquire as early as possible.

To host an event, a member must first schedule a meeting with general manager Jennifer Peretti or Dante event coordinator Ashley

Perham. Available dates and rooms, type of event, estimated guest count, timing, catering needs and other pertinent details will be discussed.

The member's desired room and date will be placed on hold for two weeks to allow time to decide if the center is the place for the event, without the date getting booked in

the meantime.

At the end of the two weeks, if a security deposit has not been received, the date will be released.

To confirm an event, a deposit must be paid and a contract signed and dated.

Members can rent a banquet room at a 50% discount for a personal event for themselves, for family members—

limited to spouses, parents and children—or for a personally owned business.

Members with questions about the discount may contact club president Pat Orelli at 916-369-2327.

For event inquiries, send an email to info@danteclub.com or call 916-925-8230.



WHY I'M PROUD TO BE AN ITALIAN

Another goodbye and a pass of the torch, with sadness

By Tom Novi

We recently lost a dear friend and longtime *Dante's Inferno* coordinator and board member, John Caselli. A while back, John asked me to pen a few thoughts on famous Italians and Italian heritage from throughout the ages.

So in recent years I have had the honor and pleasure of writing this column as my contribution to the monthly newsletter. I've written articles about Italians and Italian Americans, famous and obscure, who have contributed to both worldwide and American greatness.

Profiles of saints and, perhaps, sinners, as well as scientists, business people, entertainers, artists, athletes, political figures and many others have populated these pages.

Also of great interest to me have been stories of Italian culture and history, along with stories of the challenges that many Italian immigrants faced. All these stories provide a unique perspective on the Italian experience.

However, as I reflect on John's passing, I'm reminded that there is, in all endeavors of life, a beginning, a middle and an end. So it is with a

mix of nostalgia and some sadness that I put a wrap on this column.

But I'm heartened by the Dante Club and Women's Auxiliary members who are stepping up to bring us new stories of Italian history and culture.

So, again, I thank John, bless his heart, and all of you for the opportunity to share stories of men and women of Italian ancestry and of Italian history and culture.

For those of us who are of Italian descent and read these stories, we should all be proud.

Grazie.

ENHANCING OUR CULTURE

Modern research tools can aid search for family histories

By Susan Pricco

When was the last time you asked an older family member or friend what they remember about their Italian heritage?

What stories do they remember about things that their relatives said or did?

Do they have memories of Italy? In what towns, provinces, villages or cities did they live or visit? What did their homes look like? What churches and festivals did they attend? What were their livelihoods?

Such memories shared with us can be valuable in preserving our Italian legacy. Much of who we are now comes from who our ancestors were.

Dante Club members know that Italians come from a heritage rich in history, culture and influence, but not all are fortunate enough to experience it in a personal way.

These days we have many more ways to research our past through online sources such as Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com. It's fun to see what was in the

papers about family and friends and events in and around their lives.

Of course, not everything about our history is flattering or attractive, but it can be a window into lives past—their struggles, victories, involvements in the regions where they lived and what was happening in the world during their lives. Sometimes family and friends can remember things that they saw or did that might shed light on the present.

Information and enlightenment can manifest in unexpected places. Once I was at a lecture at Museo Italo Americano in San Francisco. When the speaker talked about artwork, not only did I get a better connection to Italian art and artists but also a new peek into my own family roots.

So when sitting at the Dante Club at the bar or during dinner, ask others at the table about their memories, and share stories of your families. Then raise a toast to Italy and its people—our people.



News, Notes and Otherwise

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did not attend any event.

We acknowledge that some members have transportation issues or live far from the club. We thank them for their membership and continue to encourage them to support the club in whatever manner possible.

For those who could make a bit more of an effort, we ask this: How about making a New Year's resolution to attend three or five or seven events during 2025?

The board had talked about setting a six-event requirement. I and some other board members are softening on that requirement.

In the meantime, we can send all members information about the

events they attended in 2024 so they know where they stand.

The Dante Club is beginning its 100th year, so thanks to all for participating.

Food committee volunteers

As we continue to work on offering the best experiences for our private and public guests at the Dante Event Center, we want to make sure we're also providing the best food experiences with our Sunday Family Dinners and monthly club events.

The event center's culinary team and management have asked us to recruit Dante Club member volunteers to participate in a new food committee. This is after the success of a similar committee of

the Women's Auxiliary, which has been meeting quarterly with culinary staff to provide feedback on menu choices and meal quality.

Through the new committee of men's club members, we will ask members' opinions on upcoming menu ideas and solicit family recipes and flavor suggestions.

The committee will meet once a quarter to review the upcoming season's menus and discuss what's going well and what might be improved.

Prospective committee members should email our event center manager, Jennifer Peretti, at jennifer@danteclub.com to express their interest.

Volunteers will be added to our food committee email list.

DANTE'S REMINDERS



Member volunteers

To volunteer, contact George Procida for anything related to buildings and grounds and Steve DeCristofaro for anything related to social events. Reach Procida at 916-455-4738 or gprocida@gplandscape.com and DeCristofaro at 916-752-3247 or stefanodad@gmail.com.

Donations

Donate to our scholarship or building funds in memory of a loved one or a friend to keep their legacy going. And buy raffle tickets! Donations can be made online at <https://danteclub.com/donations/>.

Dante Club apparel

To purchase club shirts and other clothing items, contact Mark Pedroncelli at 916-812-6729 or peddc@surewest.net or speak to him at a members meeting. Cash or checks are needed to place orders. Members also can order through the Dante Club website at danteclub.shopgraphx.com.

Newsletter photos and news

Submit photos and news items for *Dante's Inferno* to Tom Mezzanares at tjmezzan@gmail.com. Items must be received by the 20th of each month to be considered for the following month's newsletter. Publication depends on available space and is not guaranteed. Members also can post news and photos on the Dante Club's Facebook page.

Contact information

Recently changed an address or phone number? Please alert Dan Calcagno at 916-481-8638 or dmcalcagno@aol.com.