



NAVIGATOR

JUNE 2025

THE HOUSE OF ITALY (HOI) MISSION:

Our mission is to offer to its members and the public through its cultural and social programs, an understanding and appreciation of the history and culture of Italy. Our vision is that our HOI members celebrate their Italian heritage and culture with the people of San Diego.



Entrance of House of Italy San Diego



House of Italy Bar

Ciao amici and soci,

At the May meeting on Sunday, May 18 Dr. Antonio Iannotta presented a lecture on the acting career of Sofia Loren. She lived quite an exciting and at times a difficult life. As was noted, she is one of the last surviving major stars from the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema, with an acting career spanning over 70 years. It was very informative and interesting. We have asked him to return next year. I am sure it will be another exciting presentation. Make plans to attend.

At the June dinner meeting, we will celebrate Father's Day with a young singer, Zion Bautiste Martinez. Check out the flyer in this month's Navigator for more information. **We are a family oriented organization and let's share these Sunday dinners with our families so that they, too, can experience all things Italian. I encourage everyone to bring their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to these events.** Just a reminder, children eat free.

Don't forget to email an RSVP to houseofitaly@houseofitalysandiego.org to reserve your spot. Be sure to do so by Thursday June 12 so we have enough food for everyone.

At the June dinner we will honor Claudia Verona DaMetz. Claudia has retired as Webmaster to enjoy her new role as a first time grandmother, nonna and abuela. She has given the House of Italy many years as a volunteer, maintaining the website, helping with the membership roster and the creation and distribution of HOI missives to members. We are so excited for her!!

The recipients of the 2025 House of Italy Scholarship Fund will be announced at the June meeting.

In this month's issue of the Navigator we pay tribute to Richard Tomasello, who has been the patriarch of the House of Italy for more than 30 years. He was the president of the House of Italy for over ten years and as president emeritus, he has been my mentor since taking the gavel in hand nine years ago and my very dear friend. How I will miss him!

Don't forget to sign up to host the house on either a Saturday or Sunday. One of your responsibilities as a member is to host the HOI at least once during a calendar year. We appreciate very much those of you who host more than once.

Please send your availability for hosting to me at jcpatterson@sbcglobal.net

For those of you who do not have a food handler's certificate it is easy to attain one and will enable you to serve our food and drink items to Balboa Park visitors. The websites to take the course and obtain a food handler's certificate are:

www.cafoodhandlers.com, course takes 75 minutes, cost is minimal

www.premierfoodsafety.com, course takes 90 minutes, cost is minimal.

The House of Italy is your organization and your input is valuable. Do not hesitate to contact us by email with any ideas or suggestions. Let's continue to make this year one to remember! I wish all of you a year of health, happiness and peace. Keep us in your hearts this summer. We look forward to seeing you all in September. See you Sunday June 15th



Otranto (Puglia) Ph. Siddhartha Kundalkar

2024 HOUSE OF ITALY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Carol Gratzke

President emeritus: Richard Tomasello (delegate)

1st Vice President: Rich LaRocca (delegate)

2nd Vice President: Mike Montgomery (delegate)

Secretary: Mike Ricciardi

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VP Membership: Diane Kenney

VP Webmaster: Sara Venneri

VP – Legal Matters (By-Laws): Ken Rose (delegate)

VP Communications: Don Santamaria (delegate)

VP – Calendar: Mike Ricciardi

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- May 18, 2025 Antonio Iannotta - The world of Italian Films
- June 15, 2025 - Arias for our Fathers with Zion Bautiste Martinez
- July 19, 2025 – Summer vacation - no meeting
- August 10, 2025 – House of Italy Lawn Program
- September 21, 2025 – N. Scott Robinson, Ph.D. & Sara Venneri - La pizzica Salentina

UPCOMING EVENT



June 15th 5:00 PM
Hall of Nations

ARIAS FOR OUR FATHERS

with
ZION BAUTISTE MARTINEZ

Zion Bautiste Martinez is a young, 18 year old, opera singer, here from San Diego, California. In May of 2024 he made his European debut alongside San Diego's Westminster Choir where he sang in The Netherlands, Belgium, and France.

In Europe, Zion sang two famous Italian Arias. In the Dutch capital of Amsterdam, he sang Stefano Donaudy's "O Del Mio Amato Ben" and in the French capital of Paris, he sang Tomasso Giordanis famous arietta, "Caro Mio Ben."

In December of 2024, he was selected to sing in Andrea Bocelli's choir during the critically acclaimed Italian tenor's 30th Anniversary Concert at Pechanga Arena.

In his spare time, Zion is an active writer and linguist. He is currently in the process of publishing his first book and speaks English, Spanish, and French.

He has sang repertoire ranging from Alessandro Scarlatti's, "O Cessate Di Piagarmi" all the way to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozarts "Non Più Andrai".

Please RSVP by June 12th by sending an email to houseofitaly@houseofitalysandiego.org

To pay online click [HERE](#)

\$20 members \$25 guests



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IN MEMORIAM

Richard Fiore Tomasello, a longtime resident of San Diego, California, passed away on May 19, 2025, at the age of 83. Born on April 6, 1942, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Richard lived a full and dedicated life marked by hard work, community service, and a deep passion for aviation.

For over four decades, Richard built a successful career in the flooring industry. His unwavering commitment and strong work ethic earned him respect among colleagues and clients alike.

Beyond his professional life, Richard was deeply involved in cultural and community affairs. For more than two decades, he served as President—and later President Emeritus—of the House of Italy in Balboa Park. His leadership helped preserve and promote Italian heritage within the San Diego community.



A devout Catholic throughout his life, Richard found strength and guidance in his faith. He also found joy and freedom in the skies; for over 55 years, he piloted his beloved Cessna 170 airplane. Flying was not just a hobby but a lifelong passion that brought him immense satisfaction and peace.

Local Profile: Richard Tomasello – Flying High with Italian Culture

ANDREW BAGLEY

The Tomasellos are a tireless lot. A characteristic probably attributed to their bloodline and heritage originating in Santo Stefano di Camastra, province of Messina in Sicily. Salvatore and Marion Tomasello, Richard Tomasello's grandparents, were part of the "immigrant newcomers" during the turn of the 20th century. The couple gave birth to Emanuel Victor Tomasello, Richard's father, in New York City in 1912.

When Emanuel was a teenager, his family moved to Milwaukee, where he would meet his future wife Rosalie Farina and later marry her in 1934. They started a family and conceived nine children, five boys and four girls, spanning almost twenty years. During this time, Emanuel earned his high school diploma; enrolled in Marquette University where he obtained two Master's degrees; learned formal Italian; operated his own window washing business; and taught French, Spanish and English at a junior college at night and public schools for thirty years before retiring at 70.

Richard Tomasello was born in Milwaukee the fourth child in succession. Several months after the attack on Pearl Harbor the family moved to Santa Monica, California where Emanuel joined his other siblings working at Hughes Aircraft in Long Beach. After the war ended, the family returned to Milwaukee.

When Richard was a teenager in high school, he dreamed about flying. He hired a pilot to take him and his high school sweetheart Mary Anne up on a date. He shared with the pilot that one day he would fly and own his very own airplane.

At twenty-four, Richard acquired his pilot's license and started to fly. He ultimately bought a plane in 1970. Nine years later, in his late 30s, Richard with his wife Mary Anne and two sons, moved to California. He sold his car and stowed the family in his four-passenger Cessna 170 and took off for San Diego where he started his own successful carpet business of over thirty years.

While attending Italian classes at Grossmont College taught by Graziella Spinelli in 1999, she invited Richard to join House of Italy to support her as president of the club where he became



Richard Tomasello

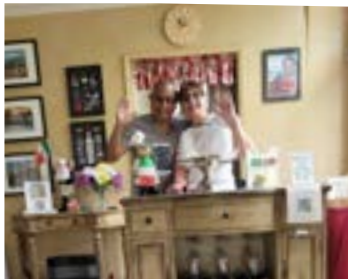
vice-president for two years before being elected to president for the next six years. During his tenure as president at House of Italy, Richard would for sponsorship and with a donation helped the organization get started. Richard's father taught him the importance of being Italian and its culture advising him, "Don't lose your Italian heritage." They would travel together five times to Italy and France. In fact, on one of their last trips together, remarkably they found Richard's grandparents house where their niece and nephew were still living in the very same house his grandparents had left almost a hundred years earlier.

Richard was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Maryann. He is remembered with love by his sons Rich and Vince; and by his grandsons Ricci, Logan, and River.

His legacy lives on through them and through the many lives he touched with his generosity of spirit and dedication to community. May his memory bring comfort to those who knew him and serve as an enduring reminder of a life well lived.

A Celebration of Life will be held on June 28, 2025, from 02:00 PM to 06:00 PM at Gillespie Field - Speer Hangars 2043 N Marshall Avenue.

PAST EVENTS



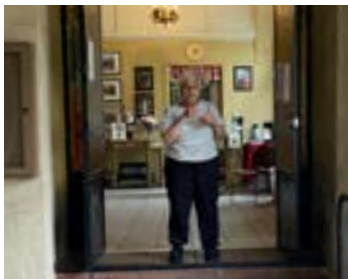
Angie Caruso & Luis Agurto



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THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

SDG&E recognizes the House of Italy as a collaborating partner and as such information is sent monthly to you, our members, to ensure you are updated on the latest **SDG&E** products, services and resources. Additional information is also available at their website <http://www.sdge.com/residential>



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houseofitaly@houseofitalysandiego.org



<https://houseofitalysandiego.org/>



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