



## Sebastiano Sterpa

July 18, 1929 - October 12, 2023

Sebastiano Sterpa was born 1929 to Giuseppe and Clementina Sterpa in the medieval village of Veiano Italy. Seb, as he was nicknamed, had two brothers Egidio and Salvatore. Because of Giuseppe's work in the Italian State Forestry Corp the family moved frequently and the Sterpa boys experienced life in various parts of Italy. In the 1940s the family returned to Rome where the Sterpa boys attended academically rigorous schools. Seb chose to attend Liceo Giulio Cesare, a school that specialized in the classics and humanities. Seb, who had an innate interest in languages, took eight years of Latin, five years of ancient Greek, and French (which he would never admit to).

During WWII, the small town of Veiano did not escape unscathed. Because the town was Nazi occupied, it suffered a severe bombardment by the Allies. During this bombing Seb's grandfather, two uncles, and three cousins were killed. Seb, narrowly escaped death by hiding in a drainage ditch as Allied planes bombed the German tanks on the Cassia Highway. After the war, Seb's brother Egidio became a prolific writer and at age 24 became the editor of *Il Tempo* one of Italy's largest newspapers. Later in life Egidio became an Italian congressman and ultimately an Italian Senator. Salvatore chose banking and became the executive vice president of Carpio, one of Milan's largest savings banks.

After graduating from Liceo Seb briefly studied law, but school was not for him. Much to the chagrin of his parents, Seb quit college and joined the Carabinieri (Italian Military). After several nights of standing watch in freezing

weather and getting and then mouthing off a superior officer (which didn't go well for him; Seb decided that military service was not a good fit for him. In 1954 Seb purchased a ticket to the USA on the Andrea Doria, on the second to last trip the ill-fated boat took before it sank at sea. After arriving in New York, Seb washed dishes at an Italian restaurant for a friend of the family until he earned enough money to fulfill his dream of moving to Los Angeles. Shortly after arriving in Los Angeles Seb was accepted to and studied business at UCLA while waiting tables at a local Italian restaurant. One night one of Seb's regular customers, who was an industrial real estate broker, inquired why Seb, given his level of education, was waiting tables. The man then suggested Seb go into real estate. "Real Estate" what's that Seb replied. The customer then directed Seb to a local real estate school where he received his license in two months.

Because of Seb's thick Italian accent, most real estate firms would not bring him on. He finally landed a job at a Burbank firm, Ranch Park Reality. In the 1950's Glendale and Burbank were the homes of a very large Italian American community. Seb realized that the local Italians were very under served by the local Real Estate community. After recognizing this, Seb went to the local post office, purchased 300 prepaid envelopes, then sat at his desk with the Burbank phone books and scoured it for Italian names. Each time he found an Italian name, he would send a postcard reading. "My name is Seb Sterpa and I am your Italian real estate agent". Within a year, Seb had listed 48 pieces of property. Within a year Seb broke the company's sales records.

In 1959, Seb became a US Citizen. With \$5,000 in his pocket, he got a real estate brokers license and opened his own office, Sterpa Realty. By 1978, Sterpa Realty Boasted \$89,000,000 in sales. He grew his company to 18 offices and a team of 300 salespeople. Four years later he was named California realtor of the year. In 1982 Seb was voted the President of the California Association of Realtors and six years later he was voted vice president of the National Association of Realtors. Beyond real estate, he established firms in complementary industries, including escrow, mortgage

and management, and further institutions like the California CitizensBank, Lincoln Title, Founder Title of Hawaii, and Founders Title Group of California. In 1983, Governor Deukmejian appointed him chairman of the California Housing Finance Agency (CHFA): addressing housing challenges for the many. For 12 years, he served as the director of SunAmerica Asset Management Corp., AIG Mutual Funds and Countrywide Mutual Funds. Further, for more than two decades Seb has been affiliated with the organizations National CORE and Hope through Housing has served as director of both boards as well as board chair for more than six years. Here with his compassion he continued to address the challenges of affordable housing and championed the causes of children, families and seniors. Over the years Seb had many financial accomplishments that everyone is familiar with. But Seb also had many philanthropic accomplishments that he and Carole took part in over the years. Amongst those, In 1975, working with a former pastor of St. Peter's Italian Church, purchased land and built Villa Scalabrini Retirement Center. He served as the first chairman of the Italy America Chamber of Commerce West; he co-founded Bridge Away Across, a drug rehabilitation facility for youth. Seb was also the director of the International Institute of Los Angeles, which assisted recently arrived immigrants. In 1990, President of Cassiaga of Italy recognized Seb with the highest honor of his country, the Commentatore, for his philanthropic and humanitarian contributions to society. He further received the Cavaliere Ufficiale, two of Italy's five orders of knighthood.

One of the most important moments in Seb's life was at the Oakmont Country Club in 1975. Seb was returning to the locker room when a precocious six year old girl smiled and waved at him. Seb stopped the cart to say hi. The little girl was Tara Persinger and it was here he met Carole Persinger, who three years later, he would marry. Carole had two teenage boys, Michael and Jon along with six year old Tara. Seb had two children from a previous marriage Terry and Patty, who were in their late teen early twenties. Currently they have

thirteen grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Further, in fashion with what we all know of Seb and Carole's kind nature and love of family, they "added 7 more grandchildren and 5 more great grandchildren. Once you were family you were always family. They would remain married for the next 44 years, until Carole passed less than a year ago. They are greatly missed and loved.

# Cemetery Details

## **Santa Barbara Cemetery**

901 Channel Drive  
Santa Barbara, CA 93108

# Previous Events

## **Graveside Service**

NOV 3. 1:15 PM (PT)

Santa Barbara Cemetery  
901 Channel Drive  
Santa Barbara, CA 93108