



John B. Accinelli

August 3, 1918 - February 4, 2015

John B. Accinelli died February 4, 2015 at home in Union City. He was born August 3, 1918 at home above his father's blacksmith shop on Franklin Street in Oakland. He lived for 96 years, six months and one day.

His family and friends called him Bacci, short for Giovanni Battista, and knew him as a kind-hearted and generous man full of fun with a relaxed temperament and strong sense of community. He was an accomplished mechanical engineer, a Naval officer, a devoted son, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, sports fan, and a true friend.

He was a resourceful, hard worker dedicated to the scientific method and recognized for his expertise in bearings and lubricants. He was unforgettable for his prodigious skills on the accordion. He played on San Francisco Bay Area Italian radio stations in his youth, and always at gatherings of family and friends. Bacci was a good dancer, too.

At the age of one, his parents, Tomaso Francesco Accinelli and Teodora Cerruti Accinelli, brought him to their native Liguria. Bacci started school in Casanova in the hills overlooking the Mediterranean. His father came from a family of eight children and his mother was one of 14, so life was rich in northern Italy for young Bacci. Yet his mother feared that her son would return to America when he was grown, so the family moved back to California in

1925 when Bacci was seven. They settled on Alameda's Bay Farm Island, growing vegetables for the wholesale Oakland Produce Market.

Soon, in 1926, his father organized a partnership among several friends, and Alvarado Vegetable Produce Co. was founded on land alongside Alameda Creek in what is now Union City. The partners and their families lived, worked, socialized and spoke Genovese dialect together. Bacci's mother was hired to cook the communal meals. Their community was supportive of each other in all things, and their strong bond lasted through the decades to the end of their lives.

Bacci walked to school everyday by following the railway tracks to Alvarado Elementary School. There he learned English, became an excellent student, and graduated in 1933, never missing a day. As a boy, he worked after school on the "Ranch," first pulling a wagon of snacks for the workers in the fields. Later as a teenager, he operated the heavy farm machinery. Six days a week his father rose at one in the morning to drive the produce to their stall at the Oakland Market near Jack London Square. Bacci accompanied him on Saturdays and practiced his accordion until it was time for his lesson with his teacher, Ralph Pezzolo, in Oakland's Temescal District.

Bacci graduated in 1937 from Washington Union High School where he lettered in track and yet again, never missed a day of school. He received an academic scholarship to the University of California at Berkeley and graduated in Mechanical Engineering in 1941. He was awarded the Key of Engineering, an honor once given each year to the top graduate.

In 1939, when Hitler invaded Poland, Bacci realized war was imminent. A recruiting flyer for the U.S. Navy at Cal's Engineering School caught his attention. He joined Navy ROTC and was commissioned as an officer soon after graduation.

Bacci completed post-graduate studies in Aeronautical Engineering at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena and was then stationed at the Naval Reserve Air Base in Oakland. He was the base Officer of the Day on December 7, 1941.

After a stint at Livermore's Naval Air Station early in WW II, Bacci spent most of his service at the Naval Air Station in Norman, Oklahoma as the Lieutenant Commander responsible for the Assembly and Repair Department, supervising more than 600 servicemen keeping airplanes in perfect flying condition. His secretary was Kathleen Inez Shipman, a WAVE from Seminole, Texas. They fell in love and married in March 1946 at Holy Spirit Church in Fremont. Their first child arrived in May 1947, and they welcomed their eighth in November 1962.

Their growing family lived in the Oakland hills among a tight group of neighbors. Bacci worked at Shell Development in Emeryville in the Motor Research Lab. At the peak of the space race in the mid-1960s, he left Shell to join Aerojet in Sacramento where he worked on the engines that propelled the Saturn V rocket to the moon during the Apollo Missions, and finally on Project NERVA (Nuclear Engine for Rocket Vehicle Application) for a manned mission to Mars. Bacci remained convinced to the end of his days that we were within sight of landing on the planet until NASA cut the program. He then worked for General Electric in Sunnyvale on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Project. When the government cut funding, he retired from G.E. and consulted for NASA on his prior work that had been incorporated into the Space Shuttle Program.

Also in retirement, Bacci returned to the Ranch to care for his elderly mother. Unable to retire from the Inner Engineer, however, he kept detailed tables of

his daily jogs on the Alameda Creek levee, logged his every bowling game, tracked his haircuts, and charted the gas mileage of his beloved 1967 Chevy II that he drove for nearly 400,000 miles. His bowling average was never below 170, and he was proud of his 262 high game.

An accomplished athlete in both track and boxing, Bacci remained an inveterate sports fan. He was loyal to his Cal Bears, followed the S.F. Giants and then the Oakland A's, and was an original Oakland Raiders season ticket-holder.

This was also a man who loved music: He always scat-sang or whistled along to a tune and he loved to play his accordion or piano. He played all kinds of music—Italian tarantella, polka, waltz, marches, tango, swing, boogie-woogie, classical, opera, and just about any dance standard. Among his signature pieces were The William Tell Overture, Anvil Chorus from Il Trovatore, and “Flight of the Bumble Bee.” He also taught his five daughters how to dance.

He is survived by his eight children: Dr. Diana Accinelli (Russ Tatro) of Truckee; Thomas F. Accinelli of Anchorage, AK; Theodora Accinelli (Thomas Tatka) of Anchorage, AK; Laura Accinelli of Oakland; John B. Accinelli (Luz Reyes-Castro) of Oakland; Mary Accinelli (John Greve) of Sugar Land, TX; Kathleen Accinelli Kachelmeyer (John) of Sugar Land, TX; and James J. Accinelli (Amy) of Sacramento. His 11 grandchildren also survive him: James Kachelmeyer (Marialena Rivera) of Berkeley; U.S. Army Warrant Officer II Dominic Tatro of Ansbach, Germany; Laura Kachelmeyer of San Jose; Roxanne Greve of Sugar Land, TX; Jill Greve of Paris, France; Lillian Tatka of Anchorage, AK; Jaclyn Kachelmeyer of Sugar Land, TX; Nicholas Paolo Accinelli of Oakland; John Tatka of Anchorage, AK; Michael Accinelli of Sacramento; and Alexandra Accinelli of Sacramento. Bacci became a great-grandfather in May when Rose Danielle Kachelmeyer of Berkeley was born.

Visitation will be on Thursday, February 12, 2015, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Fremont Memorial Chapel, 3723 Peralta Blvd., Fremont, CA. The Rosary will be said at 7 p.m. A Funeral Mass will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, February 13, 2015, at Holy Spirit Church, 37588 Fremont Blvd., Fremont, CA. Burial will follow at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Hayward.

Cemetery Details

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery

26320 Mission Boulevard
Hayward, CA 94544

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 12. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (PT)

Fremont Memorial Chapel
3723 Peralta Boulevard
Fremont, CA 94536
1-510-793-8900
fremontchapeloftheroses@yahoo.com
<https://www.fremontmemorialchapel.com>

Vigil

FEB 12. 7:00 PM (PT)

Fremont Memorial Chapel
3723 Peralta Boulevard
Fremont, CA 94536
1-510-793-8900
fremontchapeloftheroses@yahoo.com
<https://www.fremontmemorialchapel.com>

Funeral Mass

FEB 13. 10:00 AM (PT)

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
37588 Fremont Boulevard
Fremont, CA 94536

Tribute Wall

KK

“ 2 files added to the album *New Album Name*



Kathleen Accinelli Kachelmeyer - February 17, 2015 at 11:15 AM

KK

Our gigantic fig tree in the background which we all loved to climb - asked to climb - to throw down the ripe figs for Nonni and Dad.

Kathleen Accinelli Kachelmeyer - February 17, 2015 at 11:22 AM

CV

“ *I remember Mr. Accinelli being gracious, gentle and bright. The world will be less lively due to his passing. His accordion playing was a treat during some of my many visits to the family home and farm. May he rest in peace. My condolences go to the Accinelli family, especially Laura, Teddy and John, and not-so-little at this point, Nicholas Paolo.*
- Christine Volker (Cordi)

Christine Volker - February 12, 2015 at 04:07 PM

LA

Christine, OMG, call me, please. I'm at the usual number. Or send me an email--laura@accinelli.com. I would love to see you and know what you are doing and where you are. And I've been wondering for a while about your mom...Please get in touch. la

Laura Accinelli - February 16, 2015 at 11:28 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Fremont Memorial Chapel - February 12, 2015 at 01:53 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Laura Accinelli - February 10, 2015 at 12:48 PM



Dad and his Excelsior at about age 15. J.B.ACCINELLI was in rhinestones, which fascinated me. I learned how to spell my last name from watching him play on this accordion.

Laura Accinelli - February 10, 2015 at 02:15 PM

AB

“ *Bacci was a very cool guy. He was very laid-back and had a very easy sense of humor. He always had season tickets to all of the "East Bay" teams. He would alternate taking his eight kids and their respective boyfriends/girlfriends to the games. I got to see a couple of World Series games with the A's when they were champs, and the Raiders in the Stabler/ Plunkett days. He used to make this funny gesture with his hand, making it look like the front paw of a T.rex, and would ask, "Whatcha doin', Schmuin?"... which didn't seem to mean anything, but was amusing nonetheless. I also enjoyed his accordion playing a lot. I send my sincerest condolences to the family; my own father passed away just three months ago. -Alan Beitelschees*

Alan Beitelschees - February 09, 2015 at 05:08 PM

LA

Alan Beitelschees, you ratfink. What a wonderful memory! And you restored mine about that kooky little hand gesture of my dad's. Please come to the funeral--we'd love to see you. And tell us how to get in touch with you. Laura (laura@accinelli.com)

Laura Accinelli - February 10, 2015 at 12:40 PM

RP

“ *My father Anthony (Tony) Pastorino worked on your family farm on Bay Farm Island in 1929, when he came from Varazze (Liguria) Italy*

*.
Your father was an outstanding member of the Ligurian community of the bay area.*

We send our condolences to all.

*John & Roberta Pastorino
rpast711@gmail.com*

Roberta Pastorino - February 08, 2015 at 01:49 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of John B. Accinelli.



February 08, 2015 at 09:57 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



John Kachelmeyer - February 07, 2015 at 10:15 PM



It was a ONE donut day that day! :)

Kathleen Kachelmeyer - February 08, 2015 at 12:02 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Fremont Memorial Chapel - February 07, 2015 at 11:28 AM