



George M. Leonard

George Michael Leonard is a life-long Monterey resident, born on December 8, 1958, at the Monterey Hospital on Hartnell Street, to Ed and Bella (Pironi) Leonard. He is the oldest of their 5 children, the others are Francesca Hinckley, Frank Leonard, Jennifer Geertsen, and MaryAnne Lorca. His parents, siblings, children, niece and nephews, and most of his aunts, uncles, cousins and relatives on both sides of the family, are all still local to the Monterey area. His grandparents were Francesco and Jennie (Cardinalli) Pironi, and George and Frances (Cerrito) Leonard. He attended Monterey schools, graduated from Monterey High School in 1977, and attended Monterey Peninsula College from 1977-1979.

In February 1966, his parents, aunt, and uncle purchased The Cove restaurant on Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey. George was immediately fascinated with the cash register, money handling, and restaurant business. He pestered his parents to let him work a few hours at the cash register, standing on a milk crate, ringing up orders every weekend at first, then after school. At the age of nine in 1968, George was a regularly scheduled employee working the take-out window (selling hamburgers, fish and chips, soft drinks, frosties, even beer, although someone over age 21 had to pour them or open the bottles - until Olympia beer came out with "twist tops"!). He worked for \$1.25 per hour, usually 4-hour shifts, and the \$5 cash collected for the day's work was immensely satisfying. From the take-out window to the counter, then the main cash

register, to eventually cooking, George worked mostly at The Cove until 1973. In 1971, his parents opened a new restaurant, the Fish Market, on Cannery Row. George, at age 13, worked weekend evenings in the pantry, plating soups, salads, sourdough bread baskets, desserts, and filling up ice water and hot coffee carafes. He also worked at his aunt and uncle's candy shop, Carousel Candies on Fishermen's Wharf, from age 15 to 17, wanting to sell candies, but ending up in the back kitchen learning how to make the various confections the store still offers - all kinds of fudge, saltwater taffy, peanut brittle, marshmallow and rocky road, caramel, turtles, caramel corn, cotton candy, tempering chocolate, and much more. It was a great learning experience. At 16, he went to work for the Monterey Parks and Recreation Department at Whispering Pines Day Camp, Monterey Youth Center, and Archer Park Community Center. When his uncle opened Leonard's Fashions for Men at the new DoubleTree Hotel in Monterey, George went to work there. Ringing up sales was fun, but men's fashion wasn't his forte, he was always interested in money handling and food service.

At age 18, in September 1977, George went to work for Bank of America at the Fort Ord Branch as a part-time teller and supply room clerk. He had a choice between that job, or at Macy's, in the women's shoes department. Banking seemed much more to his liking, so he worked at Bank of America, in the Monterey area, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Los Gatos, and San Francisco, in various capacities in retail banking, commercial banking and small business until he retired after 40+ years, at age 59, as Senior Vice President, Risk-Controls-Operations Executive for the Small Business division at the bank. He worked in San Francisco for the last 23 years of his career, purchasing a condo in 1995 in downtown San Francisco as a 2nd home. SFO was a more convenient travel hub than Monterey for his frequent visits across the US to lead and manage his teams at the bank. It also worked out as a nice weekend getaway for his kids when they attended St. Mary's College in Moraga, and for family weekends or holiday get-togethers.

In December 1980, when George was assigned to the Mission-Bay Branch of Bank of America in Santa Cruz, he met Greta Gustafson, and knew she was "the one". They married in February 1985, at San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey, and have 2 children, Michael (married to Dr. Kristin), and Catherine (married to Travis Elder); one granddaughter (Madison), and another expected in August 2024. He and Greta enjoy

traveling, living part-time at their place in the city, and spending time with their family. They often volunteer and vacation together, which brings them much joy.

In retirement, George needed to be busy, so he became more active as a member of the Italian Catholic Federation (Financial Secretary and kitchen crew lead), joined the Italian Heritage Society (Treasurer/Membership Chair), Friends of Isola delle Femmine (member, Scholarship committee), La Galleria Condominium Owners Association in San Francisco (president of the board of directors), Compari Club, and Elks and Moose lodges in Monterey. These volunteer associations and social activities have enabled many friendships, several with childhood friends, and keep George busy, sometimes busier than when he was “working”. He’s continually involved with the things that fascinated him as a kid – money handling, finances/accounting, and food service. (But he loves being a grandfather, finally, even more!)

Whenever Greta can break away from working with their daughter, George and Greta like to travel—Italy, France, Spain, Mexico, and Lake Tahoe being their most frequent and favored vacation destinations.

Sometime between when he went to work and when he retired, George learned to make various Sicilian cookies, mostly for Christmas when he makes about 1,000 *cuccidati*, for friends and family members. He picked up the recipes and techniques from his aunts Johanna Crivello and Frances Cardinalli. And he’s trying to pass them along to his kids so they’ll take over the family tradition, but he may have to wait for his granddaughters to take over.

George very much enjoys the volunteer work that he does and is humbled and grateful for the recognition of his efforts by the Italian Heritage Society of the Monterey Peninsula. He is also thankful for the support and love of his parents, children, family, and friends.

ITALIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY HONOREE 2024