

Community Comment
March 24, 2017
Sam Pennisi

Three Generations of Service

The Rotary Club of Arcata, the “noon” club, has been providing service to the local and the international communities since 1926. This simple statement brings me to my topic; service.

My family was first and second generation Sicilians. My parents were born in Omaha Nebraska to immigrants. My grandfather was the first, then his younger brother. My grandmother came from the same general area in Sicily but pinning down when she and her family came has been more difficult. Some of it has to do with tracking women and some because we have little information on her family. We know that both families came to America with very little. They made their home in Omaha, raised a family of four, and started a successful shoe repair business. The first child was a girl but died of pneumonia at age 13.

My Mother married a man with little education but a strong work ethic. He credited the Civilian Conservation Corps with his work training. Since he was orphaned at nine, the CCC's taught him what he couldn't learn at home. Ironically, he worked at a camp in Roseberg, Oregon. During the war, he worked at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank which got us to California. I'm the only one in the family who is a native Californian.

My first memories are of not having much. I remember a one room converted garage that the four of us lived in. Both my parents worked hard and eventually we owned a home in East Los Angeles. Education was stressed and both my brother and I went to college. Their push paid off for both of us. I don't remember once hearing of service or community activities. Maybe that's your experience too.

SP → Ignorant or Unaware?

It was at HSU where I learned about a bigger picture. And then I was introduced to Rotary.

Last Saturday, our club held it's 9th annual Wine Festival. It's our major fundraiser for the year. Proceeds help us provide various service projects. Locally, we focus on our youth. We sponsor the Arcata High Interact club, we provide scholarships for graduating seniors for assistance with college or technical school, we help develop and maintain local parks, we sponsor the homework help line on PBS, we help the Boy's and Girl's Club, we sponsor youth leadership camps, we send an Arcata High student abroad and receive one to live in our American community, and more.

We partnerd with the Northbay Rotaract Club, people between 18 and 30 years of age to join with us in offering the Wine Festival and Interact help^{ed} at the event. We are three generations of Rotarians working together in service. SP

Thank you to all who supported our wine event. The proceeds will be put to good use. We are grateful to you who worked at the event or attended it. And thanks to those who sponsored it or gave donations. And thanks to those wine makers, cider makers, and meade maker, who shared your wonderful local products. We appreciate this community and have served it for 91 years.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.