



Salvatore Vincent Zagona

July 27, 1920 - February 7, 2021

Salvatore Vincent Zagona, age 100, passed away on February 7, 2021, of natural causes, after a century of life and illustrious accomplishment. He was born to Nicasio and Antoinette Zagona on July 27, 1920. After a childhood in Brooklyn and Syracuse, New York, Salvatore attended City College of New York while working as a purchasing agent for the Army at Ft. Totten, on Long Island. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942, and, after training, served on LST-549 in the Pacific. He saw action in New Guinea, Morotai, and the Philippines, including the landings in Leyte Gulf. While navigating his ship he discovered and named Helen Reef, in honor of his sister. After the war he came to Tucson, where his father was operating a small Italian restaurant, and after briefly working as a proofreader for the Star he leased and later bought that restaurant, Caruso's on 4th Avenue. He also enrolled at the University of Arizona, where he met Thordis "Teddy" Aas. They were married in 1948 and raised six children while Salvatore operated the restaurant and earned a PhD. in psychology. He went on to a full professorship at the U of A, teaching psychology for 25 years and leading a major study on smoking and health, all the while expanding and improving Caruso's. He seemed to be many places at once during those years, home for dinner daily and taking the family on frequent picnics and outings, and enjoyed a round of golf at least twice a week. He loved family, music (especially opera), language, the Sonoran Desert, and good food, and brought energy, wit, and charm to all of his endeavors. He was predeceased by Teddy, his wife of 68 years, and by his siblings Rose, Vincent, Anna, Edith, and Helen. He is survived by his daughters Helen Zagona, Edith Zagona (Joseph Prizio), Karen Zagona (Heles Contreras), and Miriam Zagona (Robert McLaughlin), sons Eric Zagona and Salvatore Zagona Jr., grandchildren Caterina Zagona-Prizio and Eugene Zagona, and nieces, grand- and great grand-nieces and nephews, as well as innumerable students, employees, academic and business colleagues, friends, and admirers. He felt his greatest legacy to be Caruso's Restaurant, which will continue to serve Tucsonans under the guidance of grandniece Andrea Motzkin with Salvatore Jr. and Jennifer McDaniel.

A celebration of his life will be scheduled later this spring. We wish to thank EVERGREEN MORTUARY for arrangements. Memories and condolences may be left at

Comments



“ While attending the U of Arizona in 1967, I recall taking my family from Moline, Illinois to Caruso’s for the best Italian around! To have a professor like Dr Zagona in a huge auditorium class taught me the basics of psychology which I later used daily as a teacher.. RIP

Christine Courtland - February 24 at 04:46 PM