

Bonnors Ferry Herald, Thursday, August 21, 2008

**Anthony 'Tony' Vilelli**

Longtime La Habra, Calif., and Bonnors Ferry resident Anthony 'Tony' Vilelli, 89, died early Tuesday, Aug. 5, 2008, at Fullerton's St. Jude Hospital not long after most of his 31 great-grandchildren, 24 grandchildren and six children bid a sad good-bye to their 'Papa.'

Tony, who has family in Bonnors Ferry, was born of immigrant Italian parents on June 2, 1919, in St. Paul, Minn.

As a young husband and father, he was drafted into the U.S. Army Infantry during World War II. During his time of service, he was captured by German forces, and held as a prisoner of war. As the war came to an end, Tony was released from the German prison camp and awarded the Purple Heart Medal upon his discharge in 1945.

In 1946 Tony moved with his wife, Arlene, and three small children to La Habra. There they opened Vilelli's La Habra Heights Ca.

During this time, Tony and his wife worked hard while Tony put himself through Fullerton City College, soon becoming a real estate broker and opening his business, Vilelli Enterprises. He was eventually joined by sons Tom and Richard and sons-in-law Lee Deierling and Jeff Kolcum. In the years that followed, and while Tony and his wife were raising their six children, Tony became a land developer, property manager and civic leader.

He was one of the founding forces in the creation and development of St. Jude Hospital and La Habra Boys Club. Tony was also one of the founders of the La Habra Board of Realtors and MLS Service.

He served on the La Habra Planning Commission, La Habra City School District School Board and was appointed to the Orange County Tax Appeal Board.

Tony headed up Our Lady of Guadalupe Church construction fund and was instrumental in land acquisition and the beautification of his church.

He was a member of the La Habra Lions Club ' often seen selling fried chicken or hot dogs at their yearly Corn Festival ' and a member of the La Habra Rotary Club as well.

Tony was honored as Man of the Year by La Habra Boys Club, and recently was honored by the group for his continued years of service.

Tony was instrumental in starting the La Habra Beautification Committee, and in 1971, one of his businesses was named the number two most beautiful real estate office in the nation. Over the years, Tony could always be counted on to join with and help numerous committees and organizations for the betterment of his city.

In addition to his love for his 'large' family, Tony enjoyed traveling with his beloved wife, having traveled to over 63 international destinations. And more than almost anything else, Tony loved to sit by the banks of a river and just fish.

Anthony is survived by his wife of 67 years; children Sandi Baltes of Brea, principal of Las Positas School in La Habra; Richard Vilelli of Bonnors Ferry, Judy Deierling of Redondo Beach, and Linda Kolcum and Donna LaPlante, both of Spokane, Wash.

Tony was preceded in death by his oldest son, Tom Vilelli, who passed away from cancer early last year.

While his great-grandchildren and grandchildren would be too numerous to name, they, and La Habra, will all miss their Papa, a wonderful role model, hero and a La Habra legend.

Rosary was held 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 10, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church-La Habra.

Celebration of Mass was held 9 a.m. Monday, Aug. 11, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church-La Habra.

Interment followed at Queen of Heaven Cemetery.

Services were directed by Queen of Heaven Mortuary, 2161 S. Fullerton Road, Rowland Heights, Calif., 91748.