

# Viva Italy!



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

**ABOVE:** Lindy Dunn greets Martha Carniglia at the party in honor of Santa Cruz's fishing families Saturday.

**BELOW:** Ama Busia contributes her artistic talent to a painting at Saturday's party.

## Alley renamed in honor of Italian fishermen; 'Mama Mary' Carniglia celebrated at pasta feed

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A quiet alley took a step back in time Saturday to become the hub of a thriving Italian-American community during a celebration of the alley's renaming.

Paintings instead of fish nets hung along alley fences and houses **SANTA CRUZ** instead of shacks surrounded it, but the spirit in the air — of a close-knit community — hearkened back to old times.

"This is the history of Santa Cruz, right here — the Italian fishers and farmers," said Norman Benito, a descendant of Italian immigrants.

Benito joined more than 200 others for a pasta feed celebrating the naming of the alley, behind Lighthouse Avenue, after Riva Trigoso, Italy, the birthplace of acclaimed chef "Mama Mary" Carniglia.

Carniglia, a Santa Cruz restaurateur and mother of seven, died in 1985 at age 86. A friend to hundreds of Italians living in Santa Cruz, she left a lasting legacy.

"She fed a lot of people in Santa Cruz. She was a pretty special lady," said grandson Mark Carniglia. "This was right up her alley." Pun unintended.

The event was not only a celebration of "Mama Mary" but of the many fisherman who immigrated from Riva Trigoso to San-



ta Cruz in the early 1900s, establishing themselves at the Municipal Wharf.

"Without the immigrants, there wouldn't be any fishing industry," said Val Belli, whose family came to Santa Cruz from Lucca in 1955. Many Lucca families — mostly farmers and vintners — also settled in Santa Cruz, Belli said.

The fishermen transplanted not only fam-

ilies but fishing techniques and the "paranzella" — a Mediterranean sailing boat with a slanted sail — that made them successful in Central Coast waters, said Belli.

With their "purse cienes" — fishing nets which form a tight purse around sardines, trapping them — local Italian fishers single-

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## Fishermen

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handedly fed an impoverished Russia and Europe during World War II, Belli said.

Wayne Bassano, whose house backs onto the alley, came up with the idea to rename it from "Fisherman's Alley" to "Via Riva Trigoso."

"This two-block area was

where all the Italian fishermen lived," he said. "I thought it'd be fun to name the alley after the neighborhood they came from so that 50 years from now, there'd be some sign they were here."

Santa Cruz formed a sister-city alliance with Riva Trigoso last year, and the Monterey Bay International Trade Association is working on developing trade between the two cities, said

Tony Livoti, MBITA director. A resident of Riva Trigoso was in attendance Saturday.

Also present was one of only two remaining fishermen from the old fishing colony: John Bassano, 91, Wayne Bassano's father.

"He's like the Godfather — make sure you kiss his ring," joked Benito as he introduced the retired fisherman to a visitor.

Wayne Bassano said the pasta feed was not only a celebration but a family reunion of sorts.

"The local Italian-American population has dissipated," he said.

"This was a way to kind of reconnect."

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