

Donald D. Galleano

3.26.52 – 6.2.21

Famed winemaker and longtime community leader Donald Domenic Galleano of Mira Loma, California, died peacefully in his sleep on June 2, 2021. He was 69.

Don was a third-generation vintner and winegrower at the Historic Cantú-Galleano Ranch, the oldest winemaking operation in Riverside County and the last remaining bonded Prohibition-era winery owned and operated by its founding family in the Cucamonga Valley.

Don served tirelessly as a leader and decision-maker for local and regional water agencies, where he focused on water supply reliability and sustainability, particularly in the face of drought. He served continuously on the Western Municipal Water District Board of Directors since his election in 2004, representing Eastvale, Jurupa Valley and Norco. He was also the representative to the Board at Metropolitan Water District of Southern California since 2015, as well as the Chino Basin Watermaster. Prior to his work at Western, Don served on the Board at the Jurupa Community Services District for more than 25 years.

Don was both a businessman and a preservationist who balanced historical protections with economic realities. His work at Jurupa Community Services District and his efforts to bring water to the area helped lay the groundwork for the formation of what are now the cities of Eastvale and Jurupa Valley. He was also founder and chairman of the Jurupa Valley Pro Rodeo, which began in the 1970s.

Beyond his work as a community leader, Don was known as a family man and loyal friend. His warmth and humor influenced everything he touched, from his personal and business dealings to politics and fundraising for candidates and community organizations.

He was always impeccably dressed – even as a child – and rarely without a fedora. He was a lover of good food and good wine and likened the experience to “traveling the world.” Don was a gentleman and a generous soul – both in tangible goods and genuine compliments – who never failed to send visitors to his home away with few bottles (or a case) of their favorite varietal.

Don still lived in the home where he was raised, a Craftsman structure his father had moved from San Bernardino in 1943 and erected in the middle of the Galleano vineyard. Don always entered the house through an unlocked side door, mere steps from the winery tasting room and store that bears his family’s name.

The interior is a living time capsule, a cross between a bachelor pad and a cozy mountain cabin. The knotty pine paneled walls are adorned with historic family photos and framed, faded ribbons from wine competitions. Don kept a cigar ashtray next to his favorite recliner, a juke box with hundreds of favorite LPs from back in the day, and a gallon jug of

Galleano's signature old vine zinfandel on the door of the refrigerator. The home was always busy, with Don's children, grandchildren and other visitors stopping by regularly to say hello.

Don managed to create a sense of community wherever he went, always preceded by his larger-than-life persona, from the Paso Robles winery where he held an interest to the vineyard where he treated employees like family.

When Don began spending more time in Downtown Los Angeles where he was born, he decided to join The California Club, and establish his "home away from home" where he enjoyed sitting by the outdoor fire pit smoking cigars, drinking scotch and sharing stories. It was at the California Club that he established and nurtured some of his most treasured friendships among a growing fan club.

He was a history buff with unmatched recall who scoured county land records for information about his family's winemaking operations, which began in Mexico during Prohibition and involved Mexican Colonel Estaban Cantú and an outstanding debt.

Don's grandfather, Domenico Galleano, who emigrated to the United States from Italy in 1913, was making brandy in Mexico during Prohibition. That's where he met Mexican Col. Estaban Cantú, who eventually deeded his 160-acre ranch to Domenico Galleano in 1927 to pay a debt of \$40,000. The ranch included Cantú's house, which still stands today.

The Galleano family moved into the home and opened the winery in 1933 after Prohibition was repealed. Don's parents, Mary Margaret Capellino and Bernard "Nino" Galleano, assisted in running the winery. Don, an only child, was 36 when his father died and he took over operations. At the time, the Galleano winery was a small retail operation. Don put it on the map. In 1993, the winery was declared a historic landmark and now serves as a family compound, with two of Don's children and their families living in other houses on the property.

Don was a graduate of Rubidoux High School, and attended Riverside City College and San Jose State, where he took business courses. His passion, however, was for politics. Don went to work for Al Ballard, the former mayor of San Bernardino, and other U.S. Senate and Congressional candidates, becoming close friends with Rep. Ken Calvert along the way.

Ultimately, though, he returned to his family legacy. The Galleano Winery now produces its signature zinfandel, and sherries and ports. Their bulk wine is sold to other wineries across the state.

Don's legacy extends beyond winegrowing. He served as President of the Western Riverside County Businessman's Association and the Jurupa Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Pacific Rim Wine Competition. He was also on the boards of the National Orange Show Foundation and Los Angeles County Fair Association.

He is survived by his three children, Gina Spraggins of Newport Beach; Annamarie Metter of Mira Loma; and Domenic Galleano of Mira Loma, and seven grandchildren; and many, many people from near and far who were fortunate enough to call him a friend.