

2018 INTERVISTE focus on our Dante Family
Mariette Alda is one of original members of the Italo-Australian Club and has been an avid supporter of the Italian community functions

MARIETTE ALDA

Dove sei nata?

In Lebanon, of a noble family. I came to Australia at the age of 11. I have been here all my life and never been back.

Come mai sei venuta in Australia?

The reason I came was to visit a grandmother and an aunt here...I had come with a sister but she did not like it here, and she went back. I liked it and stayed here in Australia with my grandmother.

Tua nonna, cosa ti ha insegnato?

She brought me up to be a very humble human being: to be kind, to be loving, and to never tell lies. She brought me up in the Church, in the Catholic Religion.

Ci parli del tuo lavoro?

I left school and went and did a tailor's trade. When I finished my trade I left Adelaide and went to Sydney.

Come e dove hai incontrato il tuo compagno di vita?

I met my husband Nino in Sydney, at an Italian dance. We were dancing, we got on well, and he asked me where I came from. I said Adelaide, and Melbourne. I knew his brother. After that he never left me alone ... he kept on chasing me. He was a musician and I thought "Oh I'm going to travel the world with a musician". After six months we were married at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney.

Qual'era il lavoro di tuo marito, Nino Alda?

He was a musician, did a lot of travelling but he hated it, didn't like it at all. He had a band in Melbourne and he became a top musician: on the ABC a broadcast for Radio Australia, which went also all over Asia. Then with his Big Band he started composing and played his music at the Melbourne Town Hall. He composed a beautiful rhapsody and called it the Zanda rhapsody. We named our first child Zanda after that.

Come mai vi siete trasferiti sulla Gold Coast?

We worked hard in Melbourne and owned our own home, however I began to feel sick, the weather didn't agree with me so we decided to move to the Gold Coast. We had three children, three lovely children.

Come ti sei coinvolta nella comunità italiana?

Robert Neumann was mayor of the Gold Coast at the time, and Jenni Neumann, his wife, who was part French, were very good friends. Jenni said to me: "Robert and I would like you to come to the All Nations Night". Robert would have this celebration every year. Jenny and Robert, Nino and I, the four of us, became very close friends. In 1979, the Year of the Child, Tony Cecco, you and I started the "Italian School", remember, Luisa? I was asked then to join the committee of the Year of the Child, in which the Italian community was already involved.



Il Comitato Ladies' Sub Committee, quando è nato?

The Italian Committee was started in 1976. I was asked and agreed to start a Ladies' Sub Committee. We used to have meetings in all the different homes but mostly at my place. I was asked to form a Dance group, and with that Dance group we went everywhere! Every year there continued to be All Nations' Day where we participated with lots of fun. Many of the politicians in the area came to our functions.



The first function was held at Surfers Paradise, at the El Rancho in Cavill Avenue. It was beautiful there. Other functions were held at the Chevron Hotel. One I remember was The Masked Ball: we won the best mask award, and had our photos in the Bulletin front page. The Bulletin gave us two pages. We had a small committee of very hard working dedicated women.

Ci parli di quell'epoca, l'inizio di quel favoloso periodo di cui si parla ancora?

Around that time Tony Cecco (first and long-time President of the Italo-Australian Club GC) rang me and drove me to a piece of land where the new Italian Club was to be built. "Oh Tony this is wonderful," I said to him. And you all know the story after that; it is history. It was the best time of our lives. Sonia, (my daughter) and Loredana used to do the floor show. When Sonia went into fashion she did the fashion parades. Bob Borbridge was our patron. He supported every one of our functions. We began to have the yearly Food and Wine Festival: you know even now when people talk to me they say that when the Italian Club was having its functions was the best part of their lives! Now of course there are clubs everywhere. I kept suggesting that they turn some of the land at the Italian Club into a retirement village for the elder Italians but nothing came of it. Now there is talk of doing just that.

Hai l'onore di essere LIFE MEMBER della Società Dante Alighieri Gold Coast. Ci parli del tuo ruolo?

Giovanna Santomauro asked me to join the Società Dante Alighieri Gold Coast as their PR, to organise all their functions. I enjoyed every minute I have been with the Dante. The committee was easy to work with as mostly they listened to new ideas and they were very pleasant to be with. I still think of every one of them. We had such a lovely time, many memories.

Un due memorie più belle di questi tempi?

We used to go to Italian Mass at Stella Maris, and Silvio de Vito would sing for us.

Come ti tieni così giovanile, così entusiasta?

I do colouring books, I still sew, I still cook. I am very, very busy. It's your attitude to life: you've got to be humble and try to be happy as much as you can. I am not a fanatically religious person but I like to pray. I pray a lot. Trust in the Lord is an important thing. I have many wonderful friends who take me out (I don't drive). I live in a lovely unit here in Southport and I am very blessed.

Mariette, hai rimpianti?

Regrets? Do I have regrets? Well, I have lost my daughter Zanda to cancer. She was too young to die. She was a wonderful girl, very smart, very clever. It took a lot out of me when you lose one of your children. That is the only regret I have in life because I have been through everything. Every bit of my life has been very interesting. My life has been a journey – a wonderful, wonderful experience: I have travelled through Europe, Asia, Africa, Malaysia, and Australia. So my only regret is losing my beautiful daughter. I have another two beautiful daughters, a wonderful son and beautiful grandchildren, and a wonderful son in law.

Secondo te :”La vita è ...”

Life is what you make it! You have to have a good attitude to life. And have faith in the Lord.

Luisa Liussi