

Santina Tonelli, Class of 1939, Al & Pearl Tonelli Endowment



Al Tonelli was a loving older brother to his little sister Santina. For many years he thought about doing something to honor her memory, and in 2004 he established a scholarship in her name with CSF of Westfield. In Al's words, "My sister Santina was a senior in the Westfield High School Class of 1939. She had an appendix operation and infections set in. God called her because she was an angel." At the 2004 Awards Night, Al personally presented certificates to the two recipients of the Santina Tonelli Memorial Scholarship. He was on stage in his wheelchair in order to do this, but it was his gift of brotherly love for his sister.

Al recognized that his life's journey would soon end, and he asked that the scholarship be renamed. In May 2005, his daughter presented the Santina Tonelli, Class of 1939, Al and Pearl Tonelli Endowment Scholarship as Al was too ill to attend. On June 12, 2005, Al Tonelli passed away at the age of 88.

Al grew up in Westfield and attended the public schools here. He began his career working in food services and became the owner of Tonelli's Little River Inn in the 1930's. For over 40 years, Al was the chef, owner and manager of this landmark Westfield restaurant. He felt it was his duty to enlist in the Navy during World War II, and he attained the rank of Chief Petty Officer before he was injured and discharged in 1945.



A true family man, Al was happiest with his wife of 60 years, Pearl, and the families of his three daughters all around him. He loved to cook huge dinners for his family and friends! Al enjoyed being active in the community and he was a member of the Lions Club, the Italian Fraternal Society, UNICO, the Elks, Eagles, VFW, Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, the Westfield Riding Club, and the Westfield School Committee.

Al Tonelli certainly knew the recipe for a full and happy life. A measure of hard work, and a dash or two of community involvement added flavor to his life. Loving his family was clearly the main ingredient and Al used plenty of that in his own special recipe.

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