

Danville Living

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Meet Joe Gatti:
Third Generation Danville Resident

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By: Leigh Chronister

With the Great Depression and World War II behind them, reunited sweethearts Orlando and Anita Gatti discovered the naturally beautiful town of Danville, California. As with many other immigrants at the time, these Italian darlings were eager to begin their lives together by starting a family someplace special. Our town of Danville with rolling hills and grazing fields was farm country well into the 1940s. The whole Valley had a population of 2,120 people in 1940, growing to 4,630 by 1950. Remarkably, when they purchased their first property in 1950 on the newly constructed Verona Avenue, the residence was \$8,000. This area today is immediately behind San Ramon High School with great access to The Iron Horse Trail. Orlando supported Anita, mother to Ron Gatti, by building fire engines. Orlando pursued this inspiration by co-founding and running the Walnut Creek Body and Paint Shop.

Enter Joe Gatti, Grandson of Orlando and Anita, and son of Ron Gatti. Joe is appreciative of his rich family culture and the roots that bind him to Danville, California. He muses how the landscape has changed throughout the years, noting, "My father was born in Martinez and I was born in Walnut Creek, since those cities had the only hospitals near Danville. Many people absolutely love the small town feel that this community has been known for and I hope the town is able to keep that feeling while nurturing the exciting economic changes for downtown businesses. For example, I have neighbors that I've known since I was young. If they see a shipping box on my doorstep and know I'm away for a few days, they will

take the box and bring it to me when they know I'm back."

The Gatti's extensive family history is enriched with the knowledge of developments to the town's landscape. Joe believes when his family first moved to Danville, the area known as the Iron Horse trail was Southern Pacific Railroad train tracks. This area would eventually be paved and enjoyed by outdoors enthusiasts and families walking their kids safely to school. The San Ramon Valley Museum was originally the town station across from the original Danville Hotel. Danville Blvd/Hartz Ave going into San Ramon Valley Blvd was the main thoroughfare. Joe shares, "From the house my dad grew up in on Verona Ave, you could see Mount Diablo from the backyard, and the streets going towards Las Trampas had not been developed yet. There were pear and walnut orchards, and oak trees going to the top of the ridge." It is certainly remarkable to reference the dramatic changes in a few decades.

Joe has not always kept his feet firmly planted in the East Bay. He attended UC Davis for Bachelor Degrees in Political Science and English. He completed postgraduate studies abroad in Italian Language and Culture, earning qualifications at the Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Italy. Later, he studied Philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. "I still enjoy visiting with family in Italy, specifically in Gubbio which is approximately 45 minutes North of Perugia, the capital city of Umbria," offers Joe. He has found the ability to learn and speak Italian fluently while in Italy to be an amazing opportunity. Joe hopes to return to Italy and visit friends and family again soon.

It is obvious Joe enjoys travel. He becomes animated whenever adventure is in the picture. Joe's tales indicate someone well rounded as he relates to many aspects in living conditions, education and mobility in various countries. "Earning an education in Europe opened my eyes to new ideas. I will always treasure the memories of exploring the many cultures and making new friends. I try to vacation in Europe as often as possible, but Danville is my home," admits Joe.

Previously pursuing a career in academics, Joe returned to his hometown with family throughout the East Bay, to support his mother Janetta Gatti who had been diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011. After this precious allotted time with his mother, Joe connected with his community in a new light. Joe explains, "I consider myself lucky to have been raised here. My mother was family oriented and very much loved Danville. I often associate the downtown area with her and appreciate the opportunities I had growing up here. It really is hard to beat the weather here. People enjoy that fact almost every day. Our streets are clean and free of graffiti. You can see kids riding their bikes from homes to the downtown area, and friends enjoying coffee outdoors throughout the year. That certainly is not something that a lot of cities can claim. I have witnessed it nationally, and overseas."

Mount Diablo, from Verona Ave Home, Circa 1950

Delving further on the topic of community, it is apparent that the Gatti Family share a common appreciation for Danville's culture of parents who invest in their children. Joe fondly recalls how his own mother instilled this trait in him. He also adds how his father continues this tradition recognizing how numerous the amenities are with the local library offering classes for children and adults, restaurants and shops drawing traffic from jet setting travelers around the globe, touring and sightseeing in San Francisco and Napa. Our region is also home to some of the best schools throughout the state of California. "The community we live in is very warm. Many here remember me from when I was very young. As a Danville native, I have lived on both sides of Sycamore Valley Road, and attended Vista Grande Elementary, Charlotte Wood Middle School and San Ramon Valley High School.

Joe relates to Danville as, "The region filled with neighbors who used to come to my football and baseball games at San Ramon Valley High School. It is great when these friends who share this history stop to chat about the latest in bay area sports or how the Danville real estate market is doing. It is a pleasure living in Danville Oaks next to my old high school. It is a short walk to Historic Downtown."

It is not only with pride, but with also sense of responsibility that Joe began attending his community's HOA meetings with a sense of commitment. It has become a passion to reconnect with his



past while discovering all the latest developments for improving where we live. "Joe brings a fresh approach to the analytical process regarding projects," states his Dad, Ron Gatti. "Joe has a talent for the modern era while having respect for the past." This increased awareness became a natural doorway to a fulfilling career in real estate. "Also, I am proud to own and invest in property that originally belonged to my grandmother, Reggie Buckley. I am currently up to my neck in remodeling, but it is something that I enjoy. The Westside of Danville is a great place to live and from all signs, it will just improve in the future," enthuses Joe.

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