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Good Fortune Smiles on 87-Year-Old

By Cynthia Brian



From Left: Joan Rankin, Heather Brittany Rankin, Brian Rankin, Vanna White, Alice Abruzzini, Pat Sajak and Cynthia Brian. Photo Carol Kaelson, with permission date was selected.

Since the "Wheel of Fortune" TV show debuted in 1983, Alice Abruzzini has invited Pat Sajak and Vanna White into her family room for a half hour of fun and games every Monday through Friday between 7:30 and 8 p.m. Friends and family know not to call the octogenarian weekdays during that half hour or they'll get this curt answer: "Sorry I can't talk right now because I'm watching 'Wheel of Fortune.' Please call back later!"

The top item on her bucket list for three decades has been to visit the set as part of the audience. Since she is 87, living in Northern California without any ties to the show, she was certain that was one bucket list item that would never be crossed out.

But in November, Campolindo graduate Brian Rankin spent a day auditioning to be a contestant on "Wheel of Fortune." At the end of the day, the casting director informed him that if he was chosen it would probably take two years before a shoot

Exactly two weeks later, Brian's phone rang and he was informed that not only had he been chosen to compete, but they needed him in the studio the following week. There were two caveats: One, he could only bring four people as his audience cheerleaders; two, they had cast four people for three spots on the show. There was a 25 percent chance that he would not be this shoot date.

Besides his wife, Heather, and his mother, Joan (who is also a great fan), he knew that one of his choices had to be his grandmother-in-law, Nonie: Alice Abruzzini. Nonie was ecstatic with the invitation until she looked at her calendar and realized that she had already R.S.V.P'd "yes" to another important family event. When you are the mother of five, grandmother of 11, great grandmother to 10, and Nonie to everyone, juggling celebrations is cause for anxiety. With the rest of the family's blessing and enthusiastic encouragement, Nonie set off for her Wheel of Fortune adventure in Los Angeles.

Fortunately Brian was chosen as a contestant for that specific date and Nonie was able to live her dream, clapping, yelling and cheering from the audience bleachers. She waved to Pat and Vanna and even had her photograph taken with them.

How did our local Moraga contestant do? Tune in at 7:30 on Monday, April 11 for the rest of the story...

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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