

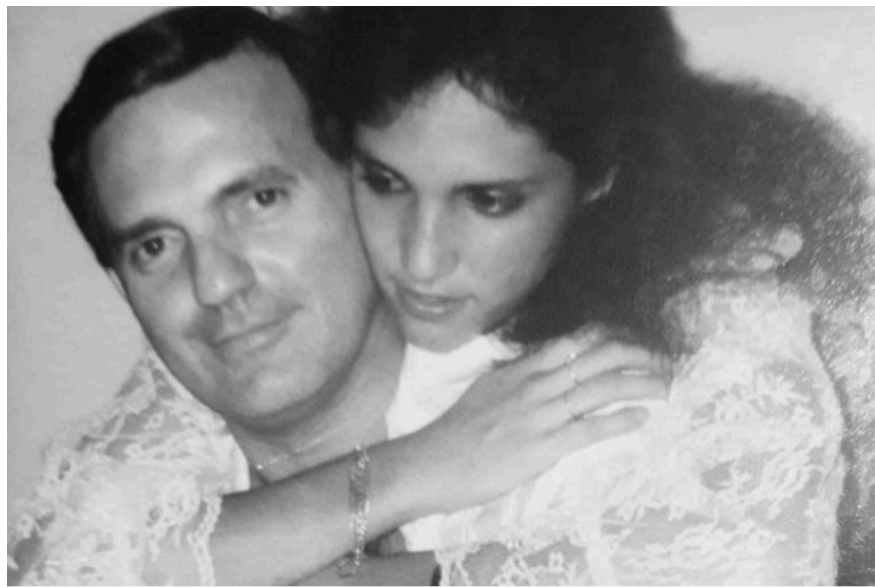


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ANTONELLA AND HER FATHER, LUCHO BERTELLO

— CHARITY —

ANTONELLA BERTELLO REMEMBERS THOSE LOST TO CANCER

A Full Heart For A Full Life

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BY | NICOLE TEITLER

The Baker House 1650 is set to celebrate its 15th summer under the ownership of Antonella Bertello. She originally purchased the property as a 1031 exchange (redo and resell) but couldn't let it go. When the doors officially opened to the public on Valentine's Day in 2005 she likened the experience to inviting strangers into her home, having become incredibly attached to her project.

"There's so much history that goes with this house and that's why I love it so much. I even saw these beautiful trees and tried to work around them. What right do we have to knock them down when they've been around hundreds of years before us?" Bertello expressed of her passion for the existing elements on the property. From the trees outside to the Sandra de Ovando flower artwork inside The Baker House, she looks for the unique and interesting in everyday life.

Her passion for design, and life, is an inherited trait from her father, one that continues to run through her blood in everything she does. Born and raised in Peru, Bertello recalled going out with her father, mother, and two younger brothers on Sundays after lunch, driving past the buildings and admiring their structure. "From the moment I was born, my father would take me everywhere with him," she reminisced, from car rides to Formula One races.

Her father, Lucho Bertello, was a pioneer in banking, "a frustrated architect," and an avid polo player, a tribute with tin-foil polo artwork throughout the property. However, his life was cut short at age 46, in 1992, due to cancer. While the primary cancer was never discovered, he ended up suffering from lung, lymph, and bone cancer, an atrociously painful experience. At only 22 years old, Bertello flew back to Peru from Spain to help her younger brothers and was in charge of buying her father's morphine.

"It was very difficult because he started sounding very normal, and then he would go off into crazy things and you didn't know where he was." Looking into her eyes, a strong woman on the verge of celebrating 51 years of life, the memory of "a brilliant man, big and strong" remained as clear as the day he was breathing. She would always be his little girl and he would always be her hero. "Is he nice to you? Does he respect you? He asked the normal questions," she recalled of his dating advice. "It was very funny because my father knew exactly how to handle me in the sense that he never imposed anything on me, yet I did exactly what he advised me to do all the time." After her father, Bertello lost her aunt to pancreatic cancer, which swiftly took her in five months after she complained about stomach pain. When Bertello was 35 she lost her cousin, age 36, to a birthmark that grew into melanoma. She left behind two children that Bertello still watches over today. In addition, Bertello's best friend lost a daughter, at 18, to a brain tumor. "It's anti-nature for a parent to have to bury a child," she said. And finally, without children of her own, Bertello lost her 14-year-old yellow lab to melanoma. "Cancer doesn't only affect people. It happens to animals too," she said.

As her 14-week-old puppy, Bella, and nine-year-old dog, Sophie, played in the Italian styled backyard, Bertello recalled the best advice she has ever been given. "A wiser man, like a grandfather, told me 'You need to switch the perspective. You cannot just focus on what you're feeling and how sad you are, you need to focus on what the person that passed would have liked for you to do. How would he or she have liked to be remembered?' Smile, with all the love in our hearts."

When the Hamptons Happening co-chair, Randi Schatz, asked Bertello to be the business honoree at this summer's Samuel Waxman Cancer Research Foundation event, Bertello had no choice but to support to the efforts of such a collaborative, authentic organization. "I do things full-heartedly or not at all. If I'm going to be involved, I'm going to make a difference." The culinary event is held on Saturday, July 13, in Bridgehampton and also honors Chef Lidia Bastianich, fashion designer Nicole Miller, and local restaurant owner Ian Duke.

Learn more about The Baker House 1650 at www.bakerhouse1650.com. For tickets to the Hamptons Happening, visit www.waxmancancer.org.