Anita Carol Bernardini Laxalt

At A Glance:

Born: December 31, 1942, Carson City, Nev.

Death: August 03, 2025, Falls Church, Virginia

Maiden Name: Anita Carol Bernardini

Race/nationality/ethnic background: Italian

Married: Calvin P. Wilson, 1959; Paul D. Laxalt, 1976

Children: Denise Wilson Laxalt Lingenfelter

Primary city and county of residence and work:
Washington, D.C.

Major Fields of work:
government and charitable administrator

Other role identities: Wife, mother, friend

Carol Laxalt
Courtesy
Laxalt Family Collection

From humble beginnings, Carson City girl became part of national politics

Born to an immigrant family and educated in Carson City, Nevada, Carol Bernardini married U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt and rose to play an important role in Washington, D.C.

Anita Carol Bernardini was born December 31, 1942, in Carson City, Nev., to Angelo Bernardini and Anita Recami Quilici Bernardini. Her mother was a widow with two children, Donald and Gloria, when she married Angelo. The three children would soon be joined by a fourth, William “Bill” in 1944 and by 1949, Anita would be a widow again, but now with four children to support. There were not a lot of extras in the Bernardini household as Anita worked to provide for her four children.

Carol began kindergarten at the old stone schoolhouse located at the corner of Nevada and King Streets in Carson City. From there she moved to first grade (grades 1 and 2 were located in the old army Quonset huts just up the street from the stone schoolhouse on Musser Street). Carol was active in school and participated in Brownies and Girl Scouts as well as many other school activities. In 1956, Carol was among the 82 students who started their four-year high school journey at the newly opened Carson High School. Carol was a member of the choir, a song team, a cheerleader and participated in other school activities. A very brief teen-aged marriage resulted in the birth of her daughter, Denise, in 1960. Carol graduated from high school and instead of heading off to college

with her friends, she became the secretary for her attorney, Paul Laxalt. She was now a single mother with responsibilities.

Paul Laxalt was elected Nevada's governor in 1966 and Carol worked for him throughout his tenure in that office. In 1972, Paul Laxalt and his wife, Jackie, were divorced. In 1974, Paul ran for the U.S. Senate and won. He moved to Washington D.C. and took Carol and her daughter with him. Carol was working as his administrative secretary by this time and oversaw his busy Washington office. In 1976, Carol became the wife of her boss, Senator Laxalt.

Carol Laxalt
Nevada State Journal, 1976

Carol's gregarious nature was an asset to her new husband, and she participated in political activities that were of benefit to him. Paul Laxalt and Ronald Reagan had developed a close personal relationship when they were both serving as governors of their respective states (Nevada and California). When Ronald Reagan ran for the presidency in 1980, both Paul and Carol helped to raise money and campaign for him. Carol became quite noted for her

> "Tremendously Entertaining Xtraordinary Astonishingly Splendid (T-E-X-A-S) chuckwagon barbeques."

Throughout all of this, Carol and Paul never forgot where they came from. This author clearly remembers Carol telling a group of us that sometimes at night she and Paul would pinch themselves and recall they both were children of immigrants who had somehow made their way from Carson City, Nev., to Washington D.C. and the pinnacle of power in the United States of America. Carol maintained friendships from her days in Carson City. Her very long-time friend, Carole Re, recently told me she "misses talking to her, her laugh, enthusiasm and her always positive attitude."

As wife of a U.S. Senator and later D.C. lobbyist, Carol was active in her community. In her early days in Washington, Ford's Theater was in abject disrepair. Carol was one of three co-chairs who oversaw the restoration of that theater. The honorary chair was her friend, Nancy Reagan. Among Carol's notable accomplishments during her time in Washington D.C was serving as a board member for The National Theatre Foundation for over 40 years. She was chair of the Blair House Restoration, fundraising chair for the national fund for the U.S. Botanic Gardens, chairman of Associate U.S. Senate Spouses and fundraiser for the First Ladies Water Garden. She was active in her church, St. Luke Catholic Church in McLean, Virginia. The Laxalt's Christmas parties were legendary. The December 19, 2000, *Newark Advocate* noted Paul and Carol's annual Christmas party was "always a draw for GOP gentry."

Liberty Seafood Mold makes elegant addition to buffet.

Senator Paul Laxalt's wife, Carol, general co-chairman of the Ford's Theatre Gala, likes to prepare Liberty Seafood Mold, offered here, as an elegant buffet side dish.

LIBERTY SEAFOOD MOLD

1 envelope unflavored gelatin
1 cup cold water
1 cup mayonnaise
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
1 6-oz. can crabmeat, drained, flaked
1/4 cup finely chopped celery
1/4 cup green onion slices
1 tablespoon chopped pimento

Soften gelatin in 1/2 cup water; stir over low heat until dissolved. Add remaining water. Cool. Gradually add mayonnaise to cream cheese, mixing until well blended. Gradually add gelatin, mixing until blended. Chill until thickened but not set; fold in crabmeat, celery, onions and pimento. Pour into 1-quart mold lightly brushed with mayonnaise; chill until firm. Unmold onto serving plate. Serve with toasted French bread slices.

4 cups.

Variation: Substitute 7-3/4oz. can salmon for crabmeat.

Carroll County Times, June 12, 1985.

Carol Laxalt apron photo courtesy Marcia Cuccaro

Carol was a small-town girl who found success in a bigger world. The love of her life, her husband Paul, passed away in 2018 and Carol remained in their Falls Church, Virginia home amongst her memories and her friends. She passed away on August 3, 2025. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on September 26 at St. Luke Catholic Church in McLean, Va.

She was interred at Arlington National Cemetery with her husband.

Researched and written by Marcia Bernard Cuccaro, 2025.

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