

EL TEJANO

Navarro Descendants Return "Home" to Corsica



Texas Delegation welcomed at the *Place du Donjon* at the Bastia Museum of Art and History
The Texas Delegation consisted of Maureen Brown, Belinda Gavallos, Charles Harrison, Annalisa Peace, Candace Perron, Laurent Perron, Sandy Salinas, Barbara Slusher, John Tillotson, Sylvia Tillotson, Jerome Tillotson, Rebecca and Callum Tillotson.



Dr. Charles Balesi and museum guide with Texas Delegation



Presenting the Texas flag to Philippe Peretti, Director of the Bastia Museum and Bastia Mayor Pierre Savelli



Rooftop farewell reception at the Bastia City Hall

Last September, a delegation from San Antonio, Texas visited Corsica, France to immerse themselves in the culture and identity of their forefather, Angelu Navarro; the father of one of the founders of the Republic of Texas. More than 180 years ago, about 6,000 miles from his father's birthplace, José Antonio Navarro signed the Declaration of Independence for the Republic of Texas. Angelu Navarro, who was born in Balagne, fled the island at just 14 years old, later to settle in the city of San Antonio de Bexar, which was then part of New Spain.

Members of the San Antonio nonprofit *Friends of Casa Navarro* traveled to find the piece of the puzzle that was missing: Corsican culture. Sylvia Tillotson, the great-granddaughter of José Antonio Navarro, admits without hesitation: "I feel a little Corsican, absolutely!" This Corsican story is shared to build new bridges, which is cultivated by claiming the bits of unknown stories.

Corsican folk singers *I Macchjaghjoli* welcomed the Texans with traditional songs and good humor. Smiling, Tillotson expressed that "this stay is first and foremost a way to find our roots, to understand the history of the island and I am certain that partnerships can be thought of."

Eventually, the delegation visited Balagne, in Calenzana to meet extended Navarro family. The Corsican Navarros hosted an emotional family reunion, which was an opportunity to share ancient connections and future hopes.

Visits to the Musee de la Corse, the Citadel of Calvi, and the fishing village of Erbalunga enhanced and completed the experience. The journey, over a year in the making, could not have been achieved without the assistance and guidance of Dr. Charles Balesi, Chevalier, Ordre de la Legion d'honneur. The Texas Navarros remain profoundly grateful for the opportunity to return "home".