



## Joe P. Garcia

November 4, 1936 - February 4, 2021

Joe P. Garcia (November 4, 1936 – February 4, 2021) died unexpectedly during medical transport on a helicopter flight from Alamosa to Colorado Springs. He was 84.

Joe's was a life well lived -- one of integrity, hard work, fairness and generosity. He was a brilliant leader and a thoughtful man, whose compassion for the people of the San Luis Valley lived deeply in his heart.

Joe was born in Alamosa, the third child of José Procopio Garcia (1899–1962) and his wife Mary Lewis Garcia (née Lewis; 1908-1987). Named after his father, Joe was known as “Junior” to many in his family.

Joe met his future wife Maria Genevieve Abeyta at Alamosa High School, with whom he shared his life for over six decades. Prior to their marriage and after his graduation in 1954, Joe served in the Armed Forces (Army) as a Green Beret and with the 101st and 82nd Airborne, graduating from the Ft. Sill Artillery Officer School and Ft. Bragg Special Forces Warfare Center.

Upon completion of his early military service, Joe was recruited by legendary Coach Joe Vigil (long-distance running coach for the U.S. Olympic Team), who recognized his abilities as an athlete and set up Joe with a football scholarship to attend Adams State College. Throughout, Coach Vigil encouraged and fostered Joe's natural leadership talents and passion for equal education. He graduated in 1961 with a Bachelors of Arts in Secondary Education.

It was in Alamosa that Joe also grew his own family with Genevieve. They have 3 sons: Leo Vigil Garcia (Santa Monica, CA), Dennis Joseph Garcia (Malibu, CA), and Richard Anthony Garcia (Alexandria, VA).

Joe started his career as a teacher and head coach at Antonito High School in 1961, leading the “mighty mighty Trojans” to legendary victories and several near perfect sea-

sons through 1964. Joe inspired his players to be their best and his legacy includes the proud title of “Coach,” as his players remember him today. He did the same at San Luis Centennial High School from 1966-67.

Joe continued his military service as an Officer in the U.S. Army National Guard and served as the Company Commander of the 3-157th Field Artillery Unit, Colorado Army National Guard in the San Luis Valley. He also served with Special Forces (Green Be-ret) Co B, 5th Special Force Battalion, in Pueblo, CO, until 1968, when he retired his military service as rank of Captain.

Joe then moved his family and expanded his career pursuits to further his impact on cultural and racial disparities in the U.S. education system, primarily within Latino/Hispanic communities. In California, Joe worked directly alongside labor leader and civil rights activist César Chávez to recruit college eligible children of California farmworkers to the Claremont Colleges. This was followed by work in Washington DC, where he began with the Department Of Economic Opportunity as a Program Manager and Analyst and swiftly moved upward and onward through the Department of Labor, as a Program Manager and the Department Of Agriculture, as a Policy Analyst in Rural Development. After working under both Democratic and Republican administrations, in 1981 Joe received Senior Executive Status as a Ronald Reagan Presidential Appointee to the Small Business Administration, in the Policy and Budget Division.

Joe’s natural leadership and business skills were bolstered by his time in government, leading him to seek graduate study that would further hone his skills for leading with integrity and distinction in a business sector. Armed with a Master of Arts degree in Public Financial Management from American University in Washington D.C., Joe founded Research Management Corp. (RMC) in 1983, building it into a 600-employee government contracting firm.

In 1996, Joe returned to his beloved hometown of Alamosa, where he opened Old West Café in the historic Walsh Hotel. His last business venture, this restaurant was an embodiment of his love for the local community.

In retirement, Joe loved his garden, his aspens, and the feel of his land beneath his hands as he planted. His optimism was never ending. He loved his grandchildren, Sam Garcia (of Alexandria, VA), Isabella Garcia (of New Orleans, LA), Vitoria Garcia (of New Orleans, LA) and Elizabeth Garcia (of Alexandria, VA) and delighted in their successes. He was in the process of building a bench in his garden where he and his beloved wife could sit and enjoy the view. His last words were “I love you” to his wife – a true love story that has no

ending.

In his final days, Joe was in the process of completing his book, embodying his never-ending passion and journey to do the good work of resolving societal inequities, particularly in education. He strived to help create a fair playing field, so that all could truly have an equal start. We are grateful and truly blessed to have benefited from his life. And, though he departed through the glorious blue skies of the San Luis Valley, he left us far too soon. He lives within our hearts and we find comfort knowing that he is with God.

Joe is survived by his wife, three sons, grandchildren, daughter-in-law (Heather Garcia of Alexandria, VA), sisters (Patricia Rosalie Herrera, Geraldine Garcia and Louise Archuleta) his many nephews, nieces, in-laws, dear friends, former students and players. He was preceded in death by his father and mother, his beloved older sister Adeline Peak, older brother Fred Garcia, and younger brothers Leroy (Pancho) Garcia, the twins Albert and Meliton Archuleta, and Clarence Archuleta.

The family would like to thank those at San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center who assisted in Joe's emergency care, the friends who shared their condolences and the family whose love we so cherish.

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, private military service and a celebration of life is being planned and will be held at a later date.

Arrangements are in the care of Romero Funeral home of Alamosa.

In memoriam donations may be made in Joe P. Garcia's name to: Disabled American Veterans ([dav.org](http://dav.org)) and Upward Bound ([adams.edu/students/upward-bound](http://adams.edu/students/upward-bound)).

# Tribute Wall



“ *Joe P. Garcia*

January 29, 2023 at 07:44 AM



“ *Pete Vargas lit a candle in memory of Joe P. Garcia*



**Pete Vargas** - March 17, 2021 at 12:05 PM



*my you rip uncle joe, my mom Geraldine will miss you more then you know ..she loves you , and she until she see you again ..she loves you and she will miss you.. god bless you brother (geraldine)*

**Pete Vargas** - March 17, 2021 at 12:11 PM



“ *Bay Garcia lit a candle in memory of Joe P. Garcia*



**Bay Garcia** - March 16, 2021 at 09:51 AM



“ *Leo Vigil Garcia lit a candle in memory of Joe P. Garcia*



**Leo Vigil Garcia** - March 13, 2021 at 09:13 PM



“ This note was sent to Mrs. Garcia when I heard Coach passed away. I believe it's appropriate to share with all of those he touched in this Tribute Wall.

Dear Mrs. Garcia,

*I thought I would give you a few days to adjust during this trying time for you and your family following the passing of Coach. Sorry, I can't bring myself after all these years to call him Joe or even Mr. Garcia, I will always remember him as Coach. There are never sufficient words to truly convey sorrow, they come from the heart and somehow they can't be sufficiently expressed in writing and or even in person, prose can not adequately describe the feeling one has when someone you loved and admired takes his/her place alongside our Lord. As I have shared with you a few times, I have not seen Coach since my days in the Valley, yet I remember this tough gentle giant of a man that was so good to me. When you folks lived at the former Guadalupe convent during his teaching tenure in Antonito, I would walk home with him most evenings after practice. Sometimes in the pitch black of the San Luis Valley night with only the shimmering stars to shed some light. We would cross through the middle of two cemeteries on the way home because it was a great shortcut for us albeit it did represent a certain subliminal terror to me. I must admit that when I walked home alone to Guadalupe via Conejos I was scared most of the time. Walking by his side gave me the newfound courage that a young man finds in the presence of someone he admires that provides an assurance and a sense of security. My closeness to Coach went beyond just the walk home, he was extra tough on me or I seemed to believe or wanted to believe, he called me Joey, and in his patient but stern coaching demeanor, he would jump on my case deservedly so if I was not doing my best. He would say, "come on Joey, you can do better than that, you are better than that, or just do that all over again, that was embarrassing - not your best effort." Having lost my Grama at the age of 7 and having been raised by my WW-I Grandfather, (another tough hombre) I perhaps had a subconscious need to be pushed to excellence, and to be coaxed to try harder. In my own form of a self-imposed orphan like environment (albeit I had my family in California) I felt alone a lot of the time so I believe I tried extra hard to belong and to be a part of families in our San Luis Valley cocoon, that provided me with the belonging and extended family that I did not have close by. I had mentors like Don Manzanares, Sam Duran, Andy Middlemist, Rudy Gonzales, Ramon & Alex Chacon, and others that gave me that sense of security that as a young child I must have needed since my greatest fear in life was losing my 70 plus-year-old Grampa at the time despite the fact he was healthy as a horse and lived into his mid 80's without any physical ailments until he had a stroke and passed away overnight.*

*I could go on and on but suffice it to say that I must convey to you in your moment of grief that for a few bright shining years Coach touched my life and gave me what I believe to be the impetus to succeed in the military, in my career, and in life helping me to become a better, man, husband and father. My heart hurts with you, and I can feel your pain in your posts, if I can just share my own grief with*

*you I might give you a bit of warm comfort that I am perhaps one of many folks he touched in pretty much the same way. So hug yourself, stay warm and strong as you have always been. Coach would be proud to know that Joey sends hugs and prayers your way and that he will always be with me.*

*With sincere condolences,*

*Joe*

*Joe (Jojo) Martinez  
joe@corevp.com*

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**Joe Martinez** - March 13, 2021 at 02:31 PM