



Mr. Leo Toscano-Martinez

September 5, 1926 - February 12, 2016

Leo Toscano-Martinez, 89 years young was born in Eureka, California on September 5, 1926 and died in San Mateo, California on February 12, 2016, the only son of Lucia Toscano (born in Zacualco, Jalisco, Mexico) and Constancio Martinez (assumed to have been born in Acapulco, Guerrero, Mexico).

As a very young boy he lived with his mother, maternal aunt and grandparents in Eureka where his grandfather worked at a local lumber mill and the family women ran Toscano's Tamales. The family moved to Crockett then to San Francisco. His grandfather, who had been a cabinet maker in Mexico, worked constructing caskets and his grandmother took care of Leo and his cousins. His mother and maternal aunt Antonia worked at the Pacific Bag Company.

From an early age Leo showed great interest in music and dance. His first instrument was a child-size violin which he did not take to at all. From a friend his mother bought an old player piano and Leo, with an excellent ear, took to it instantly. Leo's teacher, a saxophone player who read music, started him on his life-long musical love affair. He would later also play the organ, guitar, and accordion. Aunt Antonia taught Leo and his cousins traditional Mexican dances; and he and his young cousin, Elisa, appeared as a dance team at the old States Restaurant on Market and Powell Streets in San Francisco and became performers at family celebrations and local gatherings. Additionally,

through his mother Lucia and Aunt Antonia, he was included in their large and supportive Mexican immigrant community in San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Leo learned English at the local public school where he attended kindergarten. He started school at St. Patrick's Elementary School but the family moved and he then attended St. Joseph's Grammar School and St. James High School. In 1943 he transferred to Commerce High School. He continued his music studies, focused now on piano, and practiced daily for hours. He loved the big band music of the day and he would cut one class every other week to head over to the Golden Gate Theater and listen to the big bands and vocalists of the day. He funded his excursions by working a couple of newspaper routes delivering the San Francisco Call Bulletin and the San Francisco News. Leo took a six-month hiatus from high school to travel to Mexico with his mother, who wanted him to learn the history and rich culture of her native country. His teachers agreed it would be a valuable educational opportunity. Leo's mother and aunt taught him to read and write in Spanish skills he improved during later travel to and study in Mexico.

Just after his 18th birthday, with World War II news and notices all around him, he joined the U.S. Navy as a seaman on the U.S.S. Van Valkenburgh. He and his shipmates traveled to Nagasaki, Japan where they were shocked by war's ravages. At some point, he suffered a traumatic brain injury, from which he had a long recovery. He was honorably discharged from his U.S. Navy service. (Leo later attended reunions with some of his World War II shipmates at various locations around the United States.)

Coming home to San Francisco, he attended City College of San Francisco, where he participated in dance classes and performances. He began studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and later moved to Mexico City to live with his godfather and study at the National Conservatory of Music. He returned to San Francisco and began a 38-year long career at Southern

Pacific Railroad Company, largely because he and his interviewer discovered they were both veterans. During this time, he joined the Young Catholic Workers, an organization which sponsored dances in downtown San Francisco and met his future wife, Lilia, on one such occasion. Following a two-year courtship, he and Lilia married and raised six children together in their San Francisco home. He continued in his career at his "day job" and "moonlighted" around town as a musician. He also taught music lessons and continued his music studies and completed several music courses. It was quite common for Leo to come home from work in the evening and, after dinner, to gather his musician friends to practice in the downstairs music "studio" for an upcoming gig. His long-time musician friends included many pals gathered from all corners of the Bay Area who all had one thing in common: their love of music and performing. As an Elks Club member in the San Francisco lodge, he served as the official organist. He was also a member of the SF Musicians Union Local 6. Leo made many friends with whom he continued life-long friendships from his South of Market and Excelsior neighborhoods, at schools he attended, through his first newspaper jobs, his position at Southern Pacific RR, and his many other interests and activities.

One of Leo's strongly-held values was education and he stressed this to his children as an important goal as often as he could. Whether the education derived from formal study or travel, he knew it was all important. He continuously strove to provide his family with cultural experiences in the hopes of enriching them. Leo and Lilia would often be seen with their six children attending a musical performances at one of San Francisco's museums such as the DeYoung or Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Golden Gate Park's bandstand, at the San Francisco Symphony Summer Pops Concerts. Proud of his Mexican heritage, Leo also took the family to various Ballet Folklórico performances. As a classically trained musician, Leo had a great affinity for

jazz and he made it a point to continue soaking up live performance when and where he could and saw many great musicians at local North Beach and Fillmore clubs. A dedicated worker, Leo saved his hard-earned dollars to take his young wife and children on two month-long vacations to Mexico. He prized his role as husband and father, developing the itinerary and driving the entire trip, sometimes getting lost in rainy nighttime weather. He was an equally dedicated son and took his mother Lucia and Aunt Antonia on an extended trip to Mexico in their later years, before they both became ill and passed away. Following his divorce and the loss of his mother and aunt, Leo took a solo trip to Europe for a five-week vacation, where he sought delight in the sights and sounds and took time to heal himself.

Sometime later, Leo met a friend, Laura Levy, who was his companion after his divorce. Leo retired from South Pacific Railroad in September of 1988 and continued his love affair with music and became a student once again. After studying music at City College of San Francisco, the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and performing with singers at the University of California at Berkeley, Leo enrolled at San Francisco State University to complete his music studies. He proudly graduated with his B.A. in Music from SFSU in 1992. Leo continued taking courses at SFSU and proudly sang with the SFSU University Chorus for a great many performances. His granddaughter, Bianca Lucia, now a music teacher in her own right, was a music student at SFSU at the same time Leo was taking classes.

Leo is survived by his children, Rosemarie, Lily Ann, Elizabeth, Katherine and Desiree and is predeceased by his son, Leo Michael, who passed away in August, 2007. Leo's grandchildren include Alan and Gale Carino, Brittni and Anthony Barron, Sean Carino; Michele and Louie Prieto, Stephanie Traylor-Martinez, Selena Martinez; Daniela and Danny Mosto; James, Martin and Bianca Dominguez; and Keoni Fernandezes. Great-grandchildren include

Joseph, Isabella and Gabriela; Alyssa, Alexis, and J'sare-Leo, and Diego. The family is forever grateful to the care and support provided by his many caregivers.

Cemetery Details

Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery

1500 Mission Road
Colma, CA

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 17. 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM (PT)

Valente Marini Perata & Company
4840 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
(415) 333-0161
funerals@vmpandco.com

Vigil Service

FEB 17. 7:00 PM (PT)

Valente Marini Perata & Company
4840 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
(415) 333-0161
funerals@vmpandco.com

Funeral Mass

FEB **18**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Church of the Epiphany
827 Vienna Street
San Francisco, CA 94112
(415) 333-7630

Tribute Wall

TS

“ My heartfelt condolences to Leo's family. My family was sadden to hear of his passing. Thoughts of Leo bring back many happy memories of watching him and my father, Hank Segrove, playing music together. While my father was not up to attending the funeral please know you are in our prayers and thoughts.

Tina Segrove

Tina Segrove - February 20, 2016 at 03:39 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mr. Leo Toscano-Martinez.



February 17, 2016 at 10:13 PM

TL

“ 3 files added to the album Leo with Laura Levy's family



Terry A Levy - February 17, 2016 at 05:31 PM

CC

“ *Cathy From St. Mark Catholic Church lit a candle in memory of Mr. Leo Toscano-Martinez*



Cathy from St. Mark Catholic Church - February 17, 2016 at 11:51 AM

CC

I also wanted to say how sweet Leo was. We brought him communion each Sunday and visited. We will miss him.

Cathy from St. Mark Catholic Church - February 17, 2016 at 12:02 PM

GA

“ *Leo was a very special Elk brother who truly exemplified the virtues of brotherly love, justice, charity and fidelity, I can honestly say that he was one of the gentlest and kindest men I have ever known, and I extend my sympathies to his family. I will miss him, and so will this world.*

*Geoffrey Adams
Elks Exalted Ruler
1987-1988*

Geoffrey Adams - February 16, 2016 at 10:48 PM

T(

“ *TiNa and manuel. Torres (titi) purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Leo Toscano-Martinez.*



TiNa and manuel. Torres (titi) - February 16, 2016 at 12:12 PM

AC

“ *Martinez family,
Our condolences on the passing of Leo, you
are in our thoughts and prayers. May your
faith give you comfort at this most difficult
time. He was always very kind to me and my
family. He will be deeply missed.*

Alex & Gloria Carballar

Alex Carballar - February 16, 2016 at 11:37 AM



PT

“ *Leo was a great Elk and a fantastic organist. I will miss your great
sense of humor and your beautiful music you did every meeting we
had. God Bless you*

Peter Torp

Peter Torp - February 16, 2016 at 08:21 AM

VR

“ *Vivian Rhone purchased the Sentiments of Seren
ity Spray for the family of Mr. Leo Toscano-
Martinez.*



Vivian Rhone - February 15, 2016 at 09:57 PM



“ *Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Mr. Leo Toscano-Martinez.*



February 15, 2016 at 05:44 PM



“ *Grandpa Leo thank you for being a part of my life. You will forever hold a place in my heart and I will cherish the memories of you. You are greatly loved and missed.*



Jasmine - February 15, 2016 at 05:04 PM



“ *Dear Leo, What a wonderful person and friends of many Accordionists and Musicians in the Bay Area. Rest In Peace.*

Ron and Maryann Sfarzo



Ron - February 15, 2016 at 02:33 PM

DM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Desiree Martinez - February 15, 2016 at 11:37 AM

 Mary
Fallah

“ Our condolences on the passing of your father. He was a wonderful man and will be missed by so many people. - Mary Fallah

Mary Fallah - February 14, 2016 at 02:53 PM

AL

I remember Leo when he and my sister, Laura, visited my home in Oregon. What a great visit! I remember him too in San Francisco. He could play the piano in such a wonderful and lively way, seldom needing sheet music. Most of all, I remember his smile, his kind ways, and glowing personality. Bon voyage, Leo. May we meet again.

Alice Lynn - February 17, 2016 at 08:03 PM

GR

Lizzie, I'm so sorry to hear of the passing of your father. All my prayers and condolences to you and your family. May your dad rest in peace. Love, your Presentation friend, Gloria

Gloria Torres Riggs - February 20, 2016 at 03:44 PM