



## Jose "Joe" Arturo Mendoza

July 12, 1937 - November 4, 2025

José (Joe) Arturo Mendoza<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> Beloved father, civil engineer, and proud Mexican American (July 12, 1937 – November 4, 2025)

José Arturo Mendoza, a devoted father, civil engineer, and storyteller whose life bridged cultures and continents, passed away peacefully on the morning of Tuesday, November 4, 2025, with his daughter Elena, son-in-law Tony, and grandson Sammy at his side. He is remembered for his wry wit, endless curiosity, and deep pride in his Mexican heritage.

Born in 1937 in Los Angeles, Joe's childhood unfolded during World War II—a time that shaped his sense of identity and purpose. In Lincoln Heights, a tight-knit Mexican American neighborhood, he witnessed and experienced discrimination and division and was saddened to see this recur in recent months. Despite those challenges, he carried himself with humor and grace, embracing his identity and encouraging others to do the same. "I embraced being a Mexican," he would say, often recalling how he met prejudice with good-natured wit and confidence.

A graduate of Lincoln High School, Joe was among the few students in his class placed on a college-preparatory track—a system that too often limited Latino students to trade work. With perseverance and a nudge from a friend, he switched from industrial arts to civil engineering, a decision that changed

the course of his life. His career took him and often his family across the world—to Thailand, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela—where he oversaw major construction projects, including military infrastructure during the Vietnam War and for which he was awarded military service medals for achievement and courage under fire.

Recognized for his practical solutions and steady leadership, Joe once saved the U.S. Navy more than half a million dollars in the 1960s by redesigning a costly bridge project over the DaNang River. For this achievement, he received a monetary award from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, presented by Rear Admiral A.R. Marshall. Reflecting on the accomplishment, Joe later remarked, “Sometimes it’s just about using your head instead of spending the money.”

Joe’s life embodied service, integrity, and pride in his Mexican heritage. From his roots in Lincoln Heights to his decade of military and Federal service between 1955 and 1971, he carried forward the resilience and honor he learned from his mother and father.

Beyond his professional success, Joe’s proudest accomplishments were his two daughters, Elena and Julia. He spoke of them with warmth and admiration, always emphasizing the importance of education and independence. “You never know what life will bring,” he would say, “but if you have an education, you’ll always find your way.” Indeed, Joe did everything in his power to make sure that all three women, his wife and two daughters, earned college degrees from the University of California.

A champion for fairness and equality, Joe believed strongly in women’s rights, saying decisions about women’s bodies should rest “with young women, not old men.” His moral compass, sense of justice, and humor left lasting impressions on everyone who knew him.

Joe will be forever dearly missed by daughters Elena Vasconi (Tony) and Julia Kundred (Curtis); eight grandchildren, Amalia de la Rosa, Sheridan Vasconi, Nicole Clement, Samuel Morris, David Morris, Jack Kundred, Grace Kundred, and Joseph Vasconi and great grandsons, Evo and Rocco de la Rosa, Oliver Parker and great granddaughter, Sophia Clement. He is survived by his sister, Cecilia Mendoza, sister and brother-in-law, Jim and Frances De Vetis, brother-in-law, Frank Woo and many much-loved nieces and nephews.

Joe was married to his beautiful wife Theresa Mendoza for 59 years until her death in Parker, Colorado on September 19, 2021. He is predeceased by his parents, Jose Sr. and Maria Mendoza, both of Lincoln Heights, California, his brother Sergio Mendoza of Los Angeles, California, and sisters Yolanda Woo (Frank) of Monterey Park, California and Olga Garcia of Richmond, California and his niece, Regina Mendoza Verdugo of Van Nuys, California.

Whether serving with the 40th Quartermaster Battalion, rebuilding bridges under fire as a civil engineer in Vietnam, he met every challenge with quiet strength and loyalty. He will be remembered for wisdom, guidance, protection and the sound advice he gave so freely. Joe's courage, humor, and devotion to family—and to the heritage that shaped him—remain the lasting measure of his life and legacy.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions be made to the Hispanic Heritage Foundation <https://hispanicheritage.org/about/our-history/>.

Funeral Mass will be held on Saturday, December 27, 2025 at 10 am at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church

Interment will be at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery on Saturday, December 27, 2025 at 1pm.

A celebration of Jose's life will take place after interment and a location to be announced.



## Cemetery Details

### St. Marys Cemetery

6509 FRUITRIDGE ROAD  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95820

## Previous Events

### Mass of Christian Burial

DEC 27. 10:00 AM (PT)

St. Teresa of Avila  
11610 Atwood Rd  
Auburn, CA 95603

# Tribute Wall

NE

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



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**Nena** - November 09, 2025 at 10:17 AM

MV

*I first met Joe in 1982 when I started working at Bechtel Engineering in San Francisco. I had moved to the Bay Area from Aurora, Colorado. I needed to move my furniture and Joe offered to help me, having only known me a few months. That was the beginning of a friendship that would last over 40 years. Thank you, Joe, for becoming my friend.*

*Computer Aided Design (CAD) was just getting started in the late 1980's. Joe and I decided to take some CAD courses to keep up with the direction engineering was headed. One college we went to had a Mexican Restaurant nearby (El Tapatio). Joe and I would have lunch there 1-2 times a year. Joe would call me and say "let's do lunch". I long for one more lunch with my friend Joe.*

*Taking the CAD classes convinced me to go back to school to complete my degree. Joe encouraged me all the way to do this. After 5 plus years of night school I graduated with a BA in Economics. I wanted Joe to attend my graduation and he did. Joe took my family and me to dinner after the graduation ceremony. Thank you, Joe, for the encouragement!*

*I had the pleasure of visiting Joes' home in Concord, Danville, Laughlin, and the house he grew up in Lincoln Heights (I also grew up in So. California). The Lincoln Heights house was vacant at the time except for covered furniture from his pass. Joe shared with me some stories of growing up in that house and the neighborhood. It was very emotional for both of us. When my wife, Olivia, and I would visit Joe and Terry at his Laughlin house where they would take us out for breakfast at a Mexican restaurant in one of the casinos. We had some great tasting menudo.*

*The last time I talked to Joe was in 2021. He was moving his furniture from Laughlin to Colorado. We had a bad connection and we did not get to finish our conversation. Terry went home to be with the Lord a few months later. I have so many fond memories of my friend Joe.*

*Psalms 139 vs 16 says "all the days of our lives are numbered before there was even one of them" (conception to death). The Lord decided from eternity past that Joe's last day on earth would be November 4, 2025 and Theresa's last day would be on September 19, 2021. Joe and Terry are with our Lord in paradise looking down on us. I look forward to seeing Joe and Terry again in heaven*

*Today is Thanksgiving 2026. I thank the good Lord for my friend Joe!*

*Michael Villegas*

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**Michael Villegas** - November 27, 2025 at 04:58 PM

NR

“ Although I did not know José “Joe”, I have been influenced by his family. He truly promoted his values to an entire generation of individuals. These descendants will always carry his legacy and will continue to care for those around them just as he did. He promoted values of care for those around you. His family has and will always show love to those around them. Despite not meeting him, his influence on his family has encouraged me to become a better person.

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**Nick Riggs** - November 08, 2025 at 06:34 PM

DK

“ My meetings and get-togethers with Joe at our home during a special occasion or Elena’s home was just a tiny sliver of an immense pie that I was lucky enough to be a part of. One afternoon sitting with him, he told me about when he was young growing up in Los Angeles and the things he did from as simple as going out to dinner and a movie back in the day, to his working in and around downtown Los Angeles and Olvera Street. Mentioning Olvera Street brought back the memories of taquitos served in the cafes along the alley that we both remembered as one of the best tasting foods in the world. That day a bunch of us went to a Mexican restaurant in Auburn. We both agreed that the meal, although good, was not the same as the little café in Olvera Street.

Joe added immense color to any story he told. He was very down-to-earth and very humble about his accomplishments. I will remember Joe and the fun stories he told.

-Dan Kruse

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**Dan Kruse** - November 07, 2025 at 12:12 PM

AC

“ *I'm so sorry of Joe's passing. I met Joe in 1975 working at Jacobs Engineering in Concord, CA. I was young, and Joe became a mentor to me. I'll never forget him. Love you Joe, Rest in Peace, God Bless you and God Bless the family.*

*Albert Cano*

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**Albert Cano** - November 07, 2025 at 11:13 AM