



Dr. Robert Aguilar

June 26, 1933 - March 20, 2024

On the afternoon of March 20, 2024, Robert Aguilar made his way into Heaven and joined the love of his life, wife Gloria, to remain together forever. Robert, known to many as Dr. Aguilar, was born on June 26, 1933 in El Paso, Texas, to parents Juan Aguilar and Margarita Aguilar. He was number 4 of 6 siblings. In 1947, Robert, better known as "Papa", with his single mother, younger brother Carlos and sister Simona arrived in Delano, CA to start his 7th grade year. Up to that point, Papa had already been working in the fields, delivering newspapers, and shining shoes in the streets of Los Angeles.

Once settled in Delano, Papa continued working in the fields up and down the state to support his mother and younger siblings. At age 13, he contemplated dropping out of school because he couldn't afford a new pair of shoes for the 8th grade. His teacher, Mr. Beyer purchased him new shoes and encouraged him to stay in school and pursue his dreams. Those words of encouragement followed Papa throughout his educational journey.

While in high school, Papa played football, basketball and baseball, earning All Valley in football that allowed him to play football at Porterville College and Fresno State University after serving our country in the US Army 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment as a paratrooper (51 jumps), achieving the rank of sergeant. More importantly, at Delano High School, Papa would meet the love of his life, Gloria Garcia. They became an inseparable partnership building a foundation for the Aguilar family.

Upon his return from the military, Robert married Gloria on December 18,

1954 where their marriage would continue for the next 69 years with their two sons Tony and Bobby. Papa's higher education included an AA Degree from Porterville College, a BA from Fresno State University, a Master's in Administration/Instruction from San Jose State University, and a Doctorate in Administration/Instruction from the University of the Pacific. With more than 50 years' experience in education, Papa served as a teacher, coach, counselor, principal, director of Migrant Education, and Superintendent of Schools for districts throughout California. He co-founded the Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE) in 1965 and the California Association of Latino School Administrators in 1977. Some of his accolades include school board member for Visalia Unified School District, Administrator of the Year by the Association of California School Administrators, Region 14, recognition from the Executive Education 100 as one of the 100 Outstanding School Executives in North America, Cal-State LA Distinguished Educator, consultant with the Harvard University Urban Superintendent Doctoral Program, Tulare County Hispanic Roundtable Distinguished Educator, College of the Sequoias Giant of the Year, Delano Union School District Hall of Fame, and the Top Dog Alumni Award from Fresno State University. During his career, Papa also cultivated an alliance with Cesar Chavez as Chavez fought for farm workers' rights, was named Superintendent Emeritus by the Association of California School Administrators, served as a Kremen School of Education and Human Development Council Member, and he dedicated his life so that every student was guaranteed an education.

After two attempts at retirement, Papa finally committed to retirement in his early 80s. His career as a superintendent ended in the same community that provided him his first opportunities, Delano, CA. Papa was a man of few words, but what he didn't say verbally was made up with action. His dedication to provide for his family was most important to him above all. His love for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren poured out of him. He never hid a smile when his home was full of his family, music and food that embodied the Mexican culture that he was proud to be born into.

Robert will be remembered as "the new kid on the block" in Delano. Dr. Aguilar will be remembered as the man who committed his life to serve those who sought an education. Papa will be remembered as the loving, kind, happy man that always made sure you were taken care of.

Robert was preceded in death by his wife of 69 years, Gloria, his parents, Juan Aguilar and Margarita Aguilar, his brothers Fernando, Juan, Raymond, and Carlos Aguilar, and granddaughter, Candice Aguilar. He is survived by his sister Simona Doty, his two sons, Tony and his wife Tina, Bobby and his wife Melinda, grandchildren, Tara, Carly (Blake), Cursti, Trenton (Julia), Brandon (Alejandra), Ariel (Frankie), and Alyssa (Jesse), and great-grandchildren, Asher, Amelia, Kacey, Emet, Cooper, and soon to be Baby Girl Singer.

A Catholic Mass will take place on Thursday, April 11, 2024, at St. Mary's Catholic Church at 608 N. Church St., Visalia, CA at 9:30 am followed by a burial at Visalia District Cemetery, 1300 W. Goshen Ave., Visalia. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salserandillard.com <<http://www.salserandillard.com>>.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salserandillard.com.

Previous Events

Mass of Christian Burial

APR 11. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
608 N. Church Street
Visalia, CA 93291

Graveside

APR 11. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

Visalia District Cemetery
1300 W Goshen Ave
Visalia, CA 93291

Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Robert Aguilar*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - April 09, 2024 at 11:24 AM

BA

“ *Condolences to the family. He will be missed by those who knew him.*
Billie and Joe Armas

billie Armas - April 11, 2024 at 11:39 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Aguilar.*



April 09, 2024 at 11:42 PM

LE

“ *LOVE the Erwin's purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Dr. Robert Aguilar.*



LOVE the Erwin's - April 09, 2024 at 02:55 PM

LE

“ LOVE the Erwin’s planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert Aguilar.

LOVE the Erwin’s - April 09, 2024 at 02:55 PM

PV

“ I became friends with Dr. Robert Aguilar during his time as Superintendent at Delano Elementary School District. He would invite me to lunch a couple of times a month and we would always meet up at the Subway on Main Street in Delano. I would also see he and his wife every year at the annual Mexican/American Pioneers of Delano dinners. I always enjoyed listening to him tell stories of his incredible life growing up in Delano. My sincere condolences to his entire family.



Pastor David Vivas - April 09, 2024 at 11:26 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Aguilar.



April 08, 2024 at 05:50 PM

FS

“ Frank & Olivia Soria planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Robert Aguilar.

Frank & Olivia Soria - April 08, 2024 at 05:50 PM

AV

“ Adam, Lisa & Anthony Valencia purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Dr. Robert Aguilar.



Adam, Lisa & Anthony Valencia - April 03, 2024 at 10:41 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Robert Aguilar.



April 02, 2024 at 01:58 PM