



Catalina Belen Unzueta

November 15, 1938 - December 25, 2022

On Christmas afternoon, in the comfort of home, encircled by family, Catalina Belen Unzueta passed from our world to Heaven.

Catalina, Belen to family, Cathy to a special few, was born on November 15, 1938, in El Paso, Texas. When Catalina was five, her mother, Consuelo, moved the family to Los Angeles, and then to Santa Barbara. Catalina graduated from Santa Barbara High School, and went on to attend Santa Barbara City College. Catalina's brother, John, introduced her to his good friend, Martin Unzueta, who became the love of her life. Catalina and Martin shared many of the same interests, if sometimes in different ways; when it came to music, our Mom loved to dance, Dad doesn't, he loves to sing and she was so happy to see him get up and join a Mariachi. Ambitious, and willing to step beyond some of the social confines of those years, Catalina went into banking, working originally for Bank of America and then switching to Crocker Bank. United by their Catholic faith and an abiding love for God, their commitment to family, a deeply rooted work ethic, and a love of travel, Catalina and Martin began planning their future and were married, the first time, in a civil ceremony on October 1, 1960, in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1961, Catalina gave birth to her first child, Michael, the next great love of her life. In 1965, the little family built and moved into their home on L'Aquila Lane, setting down roots that would anchor their life together. Mom was happy in her work, in her role as a wife, mother, and daughter. Catalina loved long driving trips with Martin; together they explored Canada, Mexico, and,

bundling Michael up into their pick-up truck with blankets, a cooler, and a Coleman stove, they made the first of what would be many trips to the Redwoods. Years later, Mom's face would light up when she shared memories of those early years as a family of three; weddings, work, weekend barbecues with friends, and special breakfast dates with Michael made up her days. In 1969, much to their surprise, Catalina and Martin added to their family when she gave birth to their daughter Mary-Ann, and, because they could, they tried for one more and their youngest child, Jesus, was born in 1970. Sundays often saw the family routinely attending mass at St. Anthony's and, with their children and her mom in attendance, Martin and Catalina were united in Holy Matrimony. For the next 49 years, the couple had fun celebrating not one, but two, October anniversaries. Some of the memories Mom loved looking back on were camping, hauling us to the Plunge, weekend forays to Sav-On's for ice-cream, summer baseball games in the cul-de-sac, and Sunday nights spent watching Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom. Always there to support our different interests, Mom inevitably encouraged us in our different paths. Mom never stepped back from hard work and was right there to help Dad excavate the back yard, and to brave police barricades to get back home to help Dad fight off flames during the Sycamore Canyon fire. Mom could be counted on to help us with whatever we needed, she was our best cheer-leader, always reminding us we could be whatever we wanted, or were called, to be.

Though she really enjoyed the numbers aspect of her banking work, and the friendships she built with clients, Catalina eventually left banking and went to work for the Housing Authority of Santa Barbara. Catalina's compassion for people, and her desire to help others, made her a favorite of the people she assisted and, long after she retired, people would greet her on the street and thank her for the way she had reached out to them. Those same qualities in our Mom, her willingness to serve, her tendency to greet people with a smile and to do what she could to put someone at ease, perfectly suited her work with the Altar Society of the Old Mission where she had fun decorating the sanctuary and serving refreshments on Sundays after mass.

She loved being our mom, but being a Grandma topped it all, and in that role, Grammy shone. Her big heart, her capacity for joy, her sense of fun, her willingness to show up for school fundraisers, to stretch out for a good floor picnic and movie marathon, her ability to listen, to adapt, to counsel, and to never judge, made her the best Grammy ever. As a wife, a mother, a Grandmother, she was treasured and we will never stop missing her.

Catalina is survived by her beloved husband of 62 years, Martin Unzueta, her children and their spouses, Michael Unzueta (Laurence Miller) Mary Unzueta (Jeff Hilmer) and Jesus Unzueta (Christyn Unzueta). Catalina is also survived by her grandchildren, Jordan McAlister (Matt), Michael T. Bradshaw, Ethan, Lucas, Andrew, Arie, and Catalina Unzueta.

There will be a rosary on Wednesday, January 4, at 6:00 p.m. at Welch-Ryce on Sola Street, and a funeral mass on Friday, January 6, at 11:00 a.m. at Old Mission Santa Barbara. In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association of Santa Barbara, at 1528 Chapala Street, Suite 204, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, attention: Donor Services.

Previous Events

Rosary

JAN 4. 6:00 PM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Downtown
15 E. Sola St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 965-5145
info@wrhsb.com
<https://www.wrhsb.com>

Memorial Mass

JAN 6. 11:00 AM (PT)

Old Mission Santa Barbara
2201 Laguna St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93105