



Charles Versola Sr.

August 10, 1929 - February 17, 2012

Charles B. Versola, Sr., age 82, passed peacefully of natural causes on Friday, February 17, 2012, while listening to the beautiful music he loved so much.

He was born on August 10, 1929, in Santa Barbara, CA to the late Leo and Mary Versola, and is reputed to be the first Filipino born in the city. He attended Wilson Elementary, La Cumbre Jr. High and Lompoc High School. He left school before graduating to serve in the United States Army Air Corps in 1946 at the young age of 17. After boot camp, Charles shipped off overseas to Okinawa where he served his country for two years before returning and finishing his final year of duty at March Air Force Base.

Charles subsequently returned to school where he finished getting his G.E.D. and playing quarterback for Santa Maria Jr. College. Charles moved back to Santa Barbara where he met Luisa Navares while she was visiting from out of town. The two married on July 28, 1950 in Los Angeles where they lived until 1955. Returning to Santa Barbara, he went to work at Joe's Café joining the rest of his family on staff. He and Luisa were blessed with a son, Charles Rey, in 1959.

Charles later met Ethel Watts while she was working at Wilson's Furniture Store. They quickly fell in love and were married March 26, 1963. They were

blessed with four sons: Leo, Christopher, Matthew (+) and Charles Jr. They were a rowdy bunch from the start and his devotion and pride in his sons was profound and everlasting. He lived for them and through them and supported them in all of their adventures.

Except for a number of years with the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Dept., he remained close to the service industry he was raised in. Charles managed the Snack Shack and later went on to own and operate various businesses in town. Baukies, Dawn Sandwiches, Power Up Gas, and A Mobile Copy Service. But he and Ethel will always be known and remembered most for the Versola Family Drive-In.

Football being his biggest passion, in 1971, Charles helped found the YFL as one of the 13 original coaches. To this day, 'Coach Versola' is remembered for the care he showed for his players; his tough coaching ways that also taught life lessons. He made friends with everyone. And whatever he became passionate about, he pursued it with gusto: cars, music, tattoos. He also loved cars and would buy them, trade them and sell them constantly. He loved music and after retiring, learned how to play the congas and saxophone. Out of respect, he waited until his mother had passed to get his first tattoo, and then became a living piece of Polynesian art.

He always supported his son's endeavors, which included football, BMX racing, jet ski racing, filmmaking, music, and graphic arts and design. Every friend and girl the boys brought home was made to feel part of the family. When his son Chris followed in his footsteps and took up coaching football, Charles could always be found in the stands, yelling plays and cheering on the players. Everyone knew who he was.

He could be tough as nails and yet soft as a teddy bear. Money was usually tight and as a family they learned to make ends meet. But whenever he could

give his family something they desired, he did so without hesitation. He frequently surprised them with gifts usually when they least expected it.

After enjoying the Hawaiian Islands at his son Leo's wedding, he adopted the "Aloha" spirit and brought it home with him. He rolled through life with the ease of water and meditated on finding peace. Although he wasn't a religious man, in his later years he became very spiritual. He wanted to learn and connect to know that he had served a purpose and that he would be welcomed in heaven.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Leo and Mary Versola, his son Matthew Versola and his brother, David Versola.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years Ethel, his sons Rey (Karen), Leo (Hannah), Christopher (Talli, his fiancée) and Charles Jr. Rey and Karen blessed him with three grandsons: Matthew, Christopher and Benjamin. Leo and Hannah shared their sons Travis and Griffin and Chris and Talli will soon be sharing Jenna and Jessie. He is also survived by his brothers James and Douglas and numerous nieces, nephews and extended family.

In celebration of his life, a memorial service will be held Saturday, February 25, 2012 at 11:00 am at Welch-Ryce Haider Mortuary, 15 E. Sola St, Santa Barbara. A reception will follow at the Filipino Community Assoc Bldg, 425 State St., Santa Barbara.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Santa Barbara Artificial Kidney Center, 1704 State St., Santa Barbara 93101.

"You're a stranger here but once."

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB **25**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Downtown

15 E. Sola St.

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

(805) 965-5145

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