



## Martin Unzueta

January 3, 2023

On January 3rd, God called our Father, Martin Unzueta, home. Surrounded by family, Daddy let go of our hands that morning so he could join hands once again with our Mom, Catalina Unzueta, in Heaven.

Martin was born in Santa Barbara, on November 11, 1931, to Simon and Romalda Unzueta. The Ladera Street he grew up on was a clay track that turned swampy red in the rain. At ten years old, Martin was helping his Godfather, Tomas, work on cars. Training alongside his Nino gave Martin a means of earning money and birthed in him a commendable and rare work ethic that grew as he did. Those mechanic lessons honed Martin's innate skill and fed the passion which became his life's work. Time spent with his Nino and Nina deepened ties between the Unzueta and Herrera families and created rich bonds which have passed through three more generations.

Martin graduated from Santa Barbara High, but it was his mom who collected his diploma. Martin, along with his friends John, Eddie, Sammy, and Raymond, had enlisted in the National Guard and half-way through senior year, their battalion was called into active duty to support the United States' effort in the Korean Conflict. Martin went from basic training in San Luis Obispo, to tank school in Lexington, Kentucky, before returning home on a brief leave. Martin's unit then embarked on a twenty-one day crossing to Japan, before commencing infiltration of Korea. As a member of the United States Army's 981st battalion, Martin reached Korea in the middle of a brutal winter and spent the next two years fighting in the Korean War. Honorably discharged as a sergeant in 1952, Martin never forgot the friends he made, and never forgot to honor those who didn't make it home.

At twenty-four, Martin began dating Catalina Belen, the younger sister of his good friend, John. While it took them a while to wind their way toward marriage, Martin knew he'd found the love of his life and the two enjoyed the relationship they were building. Martin's army buddies, and the women they began to build lives with, became Belen's friends, too, and those relationships followed them through life. On October 1, 1960, Martin and Catalina were married in Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1961, the happy couple welcomed their first child, Miguel, and in 1964, the proud parents began to build a house for their little family on L'Aquila Lane. By then, Martin was working full-time as a mechanic for Mission

Linen; at the end of his work day, he'd have a quick dinner then rush to spend a few hours working on wiring and plumbing their house. On New Year's Eve, 1964, Martin and Belen spent the first night in their new home; their "bed" was a pile of blankets on the living room floor, their "table," a piece of plywood extended over two sawhorses, and years later they would describe it as one of the happiest nights of their lives. Martin and Belen had many adventures in those early years, they traveled to Mexico where a highlight of his life were the few days he spent singing with Miguel Aceves Mejia in Mexico City. Invited to join Mejia and his band, Martin considered the offer but chose to put his wife and son in front of his love for singing. Martin, Belen, and Michael spent the next several years pouring concrete, visiting Disneyland, terracing the backyard, and sharing time as a family. Invited to join a camping trip, the family of three had fun sleeping in the bed of a pick-up truck, tramping through a forest, and every subsequent summer was spent trekking up 101 to the redwoods at Richardson Grove. In 1969, Martin and Belen were happily surprised to find she was pregnant; their daughter, Mary-Ann, was born that August. They tried again, and their son, Jesus, was born in December, 1970. Their family complete, Martin's priority was to provide a good life for them, to be a good husband, the best father he could be, to live a life that honored God, to pass his faith to his children, and do what he could to help others along the way.

When Martin encountered obstacles, he found a way around. Though the work was physically taxing and required long days, Martin enjoyed his work as a mechanic. While our dad cautioned us, "Don't work hard, work smart," he was so quick to say, "I loved working the tools, I dearly loved it." When pain from carpal tunnel became the obstacle that forced Dad to leave his tools, he found another way to provide when he began chauffeuring full time. Blessed, again, to have work that made him happy, Dad drove clients all over California, but especially liked "the longhauls;" trips to Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Maryland.

Taking care of family was dad's work, his priority, his great pleasure. Dad supported each of us, he drummed into us the skills and advice he believed would serve us well. Dad was always there when we needed him to pick up the pieces or to celebrate our victories. Dad was proud to have served his country, and was especially proud of, and quick to brag about, the way both of his sons also served their country, even as he was very relieved neither of them were forced to witness combat. Overjoyed to be a Grandpa, he was a faithful mixer of Ovaltine magic, a bedtime crooner, he showed up for Saturday soccer games, he cooked hundreds of pancakes, and he was present to listen, advise, hug. In 2016, Martin was told he would have to begin emergency dialysis or Hospice.

Determined to have more time with his wife and family, our Dad fought, hard, to remain with us and God blessed Dad, twice, with miraculous healing, and further blessed him with excellent doctors. We are especially grateful to Bill Golgert, as well as Daniel Alfson, Martin Bean, and Mattie Jansen for the wonderful care they gave our dad. The kindness,

compassion, and sincere affection shown our father, the patience and access granted our family, by this team, as well the Fresenius staff, made this path easier to traverse, less scary, less lonely, than it would otherwise have been. The loss of our Dad was never going to be easy, coming so quickly after our Mom intensifies the hurt, but we celebrate the life he lived, and we applaud our father's faith, strength and determination. We miss you, Dad. We love you so.

Preceded in death by his beloved wife of sixty-two years, Catalina Unzueta, Martin is survived by his children, Miguel Unzueta (Laurence Miller), Mary Unzueta (Jeff Hilmer), and Jesus Unzueta (Christyn Unzueta), and his grandchildren, Jordan McAlister (Matt McAlister), Michael Bradshaw, and Ethan, Lucas, Andrew, Arie, and Catalina Unzueta. Martin is also survived by his only remaining sibling, Loretta Osborne.

Dad's rosary will be Friday, February 17th, at 6:00 p.m. at Welch-Ryce on Sola. Our father's funeral mass will be Saturday, February 18th, at 11:00 a.m. at the Old Mission Santa Barbara, followed by burial at Calvary Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Save the Redwoods League at 111 Sutter Street, 11th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94104.

# Cemetery Details

## Calvary Cemetery

199 North Hope Ave  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
(805) 687-8811  
[http://www.archdiocese.la/directories/cemeteries/info.php?cemetery\\_id=3](http://www.archdiocese.la/directories/cemeteries/info.php?cemetery_id=3)

# Previous Events

## Rosary

**FEB 17.** 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (PT)

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

## Funeral Mass

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

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