



Joe Vera, III.

April 16, 2025

Joe Vera, age 69, was called to be with the Lord on April 16, 2025 during Holy Week, his most cherished holiday.

Joe was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, whose life was marked by faith, vision and resilience. Born and raised in Pharr, Texas, Joe was a transformative leader in public service and cultural development.

Starting his working life at just six years old by shining shoes and selling Coca-Colas, he developed an extraordinary work ethic rooted in his humble beginnings. Guided by strong Catholic values and a profound sense of duty to God, country, and community, Joe was known for his discerning spirit which often moved his heart into action by helping to meet the needs of others.

Joe dedicated himself to crafting experiences that brought communities together, elevated civic pride, and created lasting memories for countless people. He was also a proud Eagle Scout, embodying the values of leadership and service throughout his life.

Joe was deeply committed to his faith and played an integral role at Sacred Heart Catholic Church for or over 40 years, significantly contributing to its growth and new construction. His dedication to his church community exemplified his lifelong devotion to service and spiritual leadership.

A visionary leader and pioneer in the festival and events industry, Joe most recently served as Assistant City Manager for Culture, Recreation, and Special Events for the City of McAllen—a role he cherished deeply, often calling it his dream job and proudly stating he would "sprint to work every day." Under his meticulous attention to detail and relentless drive, McAllen flourished into a national and international destination. Joe spearheaded the creation and expansion of landmark events including the McAllen Holiday Parade, South Pole Illuminated Festival and McAllen Marathon. He repeatedly quoted Walt Disney, saying, "It's kind of fun to do the impossible"—a principle he exemplified throughout his career.

Before joining McAllen in 2014, Joe profoundly impacted the City of Hidalgo, leading its transformation from a small border town to a bustling cultural and entertainment destination. He was instrumental in launching BorderFest, overseeing the development of Dodge Arena (now Payne Arena), and securing historic retail and economic initiatives.

Joe's influence extended far beyond South Texas. In 2025, he proudly served as World Board Chair of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA), earning McAllen—and the broader South Texas region—a prominent place on the global stage. His contributions earned him numerous accolades, including induction into the IFEA Hall of Fame and the Texas Festivals & Events Association Hall of Honor.

Throughout his distinguished career, Joe built not just events but experiences. One of his most cherished philosophies was, "There is no limit to what a man can do if he doesn't care about the credit," and true to this, Joe's humble spirit touched countless lives and left an indelible mark on everyone he met.

Joe served his family without reservation. He is survived by his loving wife,

Alma Vera; his treasured children, Trisha Garza and Homer Garza (Sonya); cherished grandchildren, Ryan and Reena; beloved sisters, Joann Watts (George Sr.) and Linda Casas; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his esteemed parents Joe Vera Jr. and Gloria.

Joe Vera built the impossible with pride, purpose, and a love for his community. His loss is mourned profoundly, but his spirit will live on in every parade, every celebration, and every act of public service inspired by his extraordinary life. Let us honor his life by living ours with the same grace and compassion for others as reflected in his favorite quote, "The noblest art is that of making others happy."

The family would like to thank the City of McAllen, his esteemed work team, medical team and lifelong physician Dr. Leonel Moreno and staff for their endless care and support.

Civil Services for Joe Vera will be held Monday, April 21, 2025, at 4:00 pm, with the Rosary following at 6:00 pm at the McAllen Performing Arts Center. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 208 E Camelia Avenue, Hidalgo, TX, on Tuesday, April 22, at 1:00 pm. Funeral interment will follow at Palm Valley Memorial Gardens, 2607 N Sugar Rd, Pharr, TX 78577.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to United Way of South Texas and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Hidalgo, TX.

Cemetery Details

Palm Valley Memorial Gardens

4607 N Sugar Rd
Pharr, TX 78577

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 21. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

McAllen Performing Arts Center
801 Convention Center Boulevard
McAllen, TX 78501

Rosary

APR 21. 6:00 PM (CT)

McAllen Performing Arts Center
801 Convention Center Boulevard
McAllen, TX 78501

Funeral Mass

APR 22. 1:00 PM (CT)

Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Hidalgo
208 E. Camelia Ave
Hidalgo, TX

Interment

APR **22**. 3:00 PM (CT)

Palm Valley Memorial Gardens
4607 N Sugar Rd
Pharr, TX 78577

Tribute Wall

JK

“ *Our prayers are with you and your family
Sorry to hear about our good friend
Joan and Louis Katz*

joan & louis Katz - April 24, 2025 at 09:08 PM

MC

“ *Mr. Vera, was a truly exceptional person who will be greatly missed.
My deepest condolences to the Vera Family. Wishing you peace
during this hard time. May his happy memories give you peace and
comfort.*

Maggie Cabrera - April 22, 2025 at 02:35 PM

LE

“ *Dear Vera Family,*

*We are deeply saddened to hear of the
passing of your beloved Mr. Joe Vera. Please
accept our sincerest condolences during this
difficult time. He was a true gentleman, admired for his kindness,
integrity, and strength. His memory will remain a source of comfort
and inspiration to all who knew him.*



*May you find peace in the love that surrounds you and in the many
cherished memories you hold. Our thoughts are with you and your
family.*

*With deepest sympathy,
Harvey and Leonor R. MacFenerstein,
Ruth Hinojosa and family*

Leonor - April 22, 2025 at 12:29 PM

NC

“ My condolences to all of his loved ones. May he rest in peace. 🙏

N. Arisméndez Contreras - April 22, 2025 at 01:15 AM

BD

“ Joe was a hard working man who always was gracious with everyone. He was nice to me and my staff. He will be missed.
Grandmaster Bob Davis

bob davis - April 21, 2025 at 01:00 PM

JD

“ My condolences to the Vera and Watts family. I've known Joe III since he was a toddler. I grew up in Alamo and his grandparents had a small store that was on the way to my grandparents. Our families knew Joe Vera and I saw Joe III growup. As adults we became good friends. After Borderfest was over he would sent a small bouquet of flowers to thank me for my help during Borderfest. He was so kind and thoughtful. I will always remember that little boy I watched grow up into a beautiful soul. Rest in peace my friend. We will never forget you. You were a great man.

Josie Diaz - April 19, 2025 at 08:58 PM

LR

“ I so wish I could be there to say goodbye. Joe was one of the finest people I have ever known. He was a joy to be around and absolutely tireless. Friends like Joe are hard to find and are always cherished. Linda Rath

Linda J. Rath - April 19, 2025 at 10:50 AM

GE

My deepest Condolences to the Vera Family. Joe was a Friend to the Cabrera Family since we were Kids. Our Father were life long Friends . The Vera Meat Market was down the Street from our house. Periodically I got to see and talk Joe. We would reminisce about the old good old days.

Rest in peace my dear friend. Sending my Love and prayers to the Alma, the Kids, Linda and Jo Anna and the Vera Family. Gracie Cabrera Elizondo

Gracie Cabrera Elizondo - April 20, 2025 at 08:44 AM

RG

Que tristeza enterarse que ha partido un amigo y maestro , un hombre en toda la extension de la palabra

Dios conceda su pleno descanso y mis mejores deseos de una pronta resignacion a su Familia y Amigos por su partida

*Raul Guevara
Y Familia*

Raul Guevara - April 21, 2025 at 12:19 AM