

Tribute

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happy. He's healthy."

Initially the event was supposed to be a small gathering among family but in the weeks leading up to the event the family decided to open the celebration up to the community. From then on, the event grew from a few family members to a few hundred people and included formal recognitions from local leaders from Stockton to Washington, D.C.

"It ended up being different than what we intended," Christina said. "But it ended up being a perfect day for him."

Tributes came pouring in as well for Mike Torres Sr., including ones from civil rights activist Dolores Huerta, legendary percussionist Pete Escovedo, five-time Grammy Award-winning Tejano artist Little Joe Y La Familia, and singer/song writer and Lodi native Destiny Rodgers.

"I was very excited, very happy," Mike Torres Sr. said. "I want the fans... all over the U.S., all over the world to know we appreciate it."

A Family Affair

Led by Mike Torres Sr., The Mike Torres Band is considered one of the premiere Latino musical acts in California. Over the years the group has opened for a variety of popular acts, including War, Pete Escovedo, the Gap Band, and Teena Marie.

The nine-member band has at times featured three generations of the Torres family as it performed throughout the Stockton area and across the country in

English and Spanish. Based in Lathrop, the band performs a wide range of music, including cumbias, salsa, meringue, top 40, old school, country, jazz, big band and classic rock.

Mike Torres Sr., started the band in 1970 after growing up singing and playing guitar and later performing at local nightclubs with a small band. The family has gone from performing at weddings and private parties on the weekends to making the internationally broadcast television program the Johnny Canales Show.

September 2020 marked the band's 50th anniversary since it was formed. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented the family from celebrating the milestone. But the pandemic would not stop the tribute in honor of the man who started it all.

"It has been great, difficult, but great," Mike Torres Sr. said of leading the band for five decades, outlasting all of the competition. "It was a lot of work over the years."

Humble Beginnings

Born in Urequio, Michoacan in 1935, Mike Torres Sr. rose from humble beginnings. After his family relocated to California when he was still in elementary school, Torres went on to graduate from Tracy High School. While in high school, he began boxing and was named the local featherweight champion.

After high school, Torres worked in the fields, helping his stepfather and

as a self-employed truck driver making long distance drives. He later enlisted in the Army, serving from 1959 to 1961. Soon after, he married his late wife, Margaret Grijalva, who served as the behind-the-scenes foundation of both the band and the family.

They wedded on Veteran's Day on November 11, 1961 and went on to have five children: Carmen, Alicia, Mike Jr., Martin, and Christina. They raised their children on a plot of land in Lathrop that was purchased by Mike's parents. The five acres of land, referred by the family as "The Ranch," is where four homes of the Torres family sit, including the home Mike still lives in today.

Mike and Margaret ended up having nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Some of those grandchildren have become a part of The Mike Torres Band, including Mike Torres III. The band originated after Mike Sr., one day had his son Mike Jr., fill in for a band member of another group that he was in at the time. Eventually, Mike Sr. brought his son Martin and daughter Christina on stage to perform with them as well. It was not long after that Mike Sr., decided to form his own band with just his family.

"We've never, never not been part of the band since we were kids," said Christina, who is a percussionist, keyboardist, and vocalist for the band, which she joined when she was 7.

An Educator and Advocate

In addition to being a musician, Mike Sr. is an educator who taught at the college level and has published

books about Mexico. After earning his associate's degree from San Joaquin Delta College, he went on to graduate with a bachelor's degree in Spanish, with a minor in Music, from Sacramento State. A few years later, he obtained his master's degree in Spanish from Sacramento State.

Mike began his career as an educator working as a preschool teacher, then as an instructor for the State of California teaching incarcerated youth. He later taught Spanish and Music at San Joaquin Delta College. He retired from teaching at the age of 80.

One of his proudest endeavors throughout his life was helping people navigate the immigration and naturalization processes to become United States citizens. He took it upon himself to learn the processes and, at his own time and often at his own expense, helped numerous people achieve their dream of American citizenship.

For his lifetime work, Mike Torres Sr. was inducted in the Stockton Mexican-American Hall of Fame.

Giving back and treating people with respect no matter who they are is simply part of who Mike Sr. is, his family said. Because of it, he has become a local celebrity, unable to go anywhere in town without being recognized and greeted by a friend or fan.

Over the years, giving back to the community in some form or fashion has becoming a family tradition. The Torres family has donated hundreds of performances to local causes. Treating people with respect and dignity in general is a core value of the family.

SAN JOAQUIN
— COUNTY —

Greatness grows here.

San Joaquin County Supervisorial Redistricting

San Joaquin County is starting the process of redrawing its 5 supervisorial district boundaries based on new federal census data. **District lines can shape a community's ability to elect the representative of their choice, so it's important we hear from you!**

We invite you to tell us about your community, attend a meeting, and even draw your own map online.



Have your voice heard!

"We look forward to engaging our local community and hope to see a good turnout at the outreach meetings. The more our community participates, the better these new districts will serve the people who call this great county home."

- San Joaquin County Supervisor, **Miguel Villapudua**



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