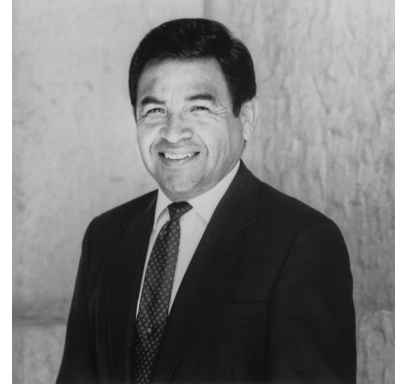


# Alberto Paul Pizano

January 8, 1931 – March 19, 2015

## **Dedicated Community Advocate and Volunteer**

Santa Barbara lost a tireless advocate for education and the cultural arts in the passing of Alberto Pizano. Born and raised in East Los Angeles, Pizano's vast contributions to the communities where he lived can be seen through the many leadership positions he held in local and regional organizations over the course of his lifetime.



A natural leader, Pizano's civic participation began while living in Los Angeles, where he was involved in the effort to incorporate East Los Angeles as an independent city. Through his involvement in the Democratic Party, Pizano was active in Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign, and attended the events at the Ambassador Hotel on June 5, 1968. Pizano also served as president of the Monterey Park Democratic Club and 45<sup>th</sup> Assembly District Delegation Chair for the Los Angeles County Democratic Central Committee.

Pizano was particularly dedicated to serving the Latino community, both through political and philanthropic support for education, and providing platforms for the arts.

During the 1960s, Pizano helped with the community effort to clean up the lake in Los Angeles' Lincoln Park and establish the Plaza de la Raza cultural arts center, for which he served as president of the board of directors. His daughter Vibiana remembers that through his prolific work as a volunteer, and this project in particular, Pizano taught his children the importance of serving the community by getting them involved.

"I learned from these experiences (and believe me there were many) that community service is important to strengthening a community, and it brings a diverse group of people together to work toward a common goal," she shared.

Pizano and his family moved to Santa Barbara in the late 1970s, where he was the district manager for The Gas Company for Santa Barbara County for 26 years. Over the course of his career, Pizano was thrice named Outstanding Leader by the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce.

Shortly after arriving in Santa Barbara, Pizano jumped at the chance to join the Santa Barbara School Districts' Board of Education when a board member resigned in 1979. His years of experience volunteering in the community were an asset to him as a first-time board member, explained friend and College School District Board President Molly Carrillo-Walker, "He knew the importance of staying connected to the community and making it better."

As the only Latino on the school board, Pizano was an advocate for creating a more diverse district from the top down. His calls for more Latino teachers, support for bilingual education and objection to selling

Lincoln School made Pizano a controversial figure in the community. Though he chose not to run for an elected position on the school board, his involvement in the community only grew from there.

Through his next project, Pizano sought to remedy another way in which Latinos were lacking representation: “My prime preoccupation became the recognition of Latinos in Santa Barbara: people who daily work to make the community better, people in every walk of life who were not being recognized,” Pizano said during an interview last fall. So he worked to found the Hispanic Achievement Council, which held annual events to honor local Latinos for 25 years, only ceasing when they saw Latinos receiving due recognition in all sectors of the community.

More recently, Pizano made a name for himself by co-founding and/or leading a plethora of community organizations including the Flamenco Arts Festival, Mariachi Festival, Public Education Foundation, United Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Barbara County, Santa Barbara Business Council, Santa Barbara Latinos for Better Government, and Old Spanish Days Fiesta, for which he served as El Presidente in 1987.

Pizano’s long-time friend Santa Barbara County Supervisor Salud Carbajal, with whom he founded the Mariachi Festival, once described him as “a tireless advocate for socio-economic justice and political empowerment of the Latino community.”

Nearly all the organizations Pizano co-founded have an educational component. For the Mariachi Festival, it’s the college scholarships that have helped hundreds of local students pursue higher education. The Flamenco Arts Festival provides scholarships for young dancers to attend classes with the visiting artists, and produces educational concerts for children.

Though he was humble about his accomplishments, Pizano’s decades of service did not go unnoticed. In what he called one of the greatest thrills of his life, Pizano was recognized as a Community Hero when the 1996 Olympic committee chose him as a local torchbearer. The prestigious National Organization of School Administrators presented Pizano with its Phi Delta Award for Excellence in Education, and the Santa Barbara Industry Education Council recognized him with an award for Outstanding Contributions to Education. Pizano also received the Anti-Defamation League’s Distinguished Community Service Award, and Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and California State Legislature commendations.

Pizano is survived by his wife Lillian of 65 years; his daughters Vibiana Pizano Smith and Sonia Pizano-Bellotti; grandchildren Pablo Pizano Smith and Jaclyn Pizano Smith; and sons-in-law Brian Smith and Philip Bellotti. He is predeceased by his two sons, Paul Pizano and Michael Pizano.

A funeral mass will be held at Old Mission Santa Barbara, 2201 Laguna Street, on Friday, March 27 at 11:00 a.m. Internment at Santa Barbara Cemetery, 901 Channel drive. A reception will take place at the Montecito Country Club.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be sent to Visiting Nurse and Hospice Care at 509 East Montecito Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101 or [www.vnhcsb.org/donate](http://www.vnhcsb.org/donate).