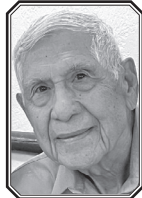


## Alfred Jose Encinas Celaya (1929-2024)



Alfred Jose Encinas Celaya, aka Freddy, Fred, Alfred, Chubby was the Greatest of All Time (GOAT). The son of Arturo and Consuelo Celaya of Florence, Arizona. The third of 11 children, Freddy was born in the midst of the Great Depression and grew in age and wisdom in Florence, Arizona, the hometown he loved dearly. He attended Florence Elementary and High Schools where he excelled in his academic pursuits and sports. Shaped by the events of this time, his core values focused on hard work, austerity, sincere dedication to his Catholic faith and beloved family. These values defined the entirety of his illuminating life.

During high school, Freddy and his family worked in the grueling fields of Arizona and California, picking cotton, fruit and other crops to help provide for the family. He would return each school year, devoted to mastering his schoolwork and excelling as an exceptional athlete. In 1947, Freddy's Junior year, his high school basketball team was the first predominantly Latino team to win a statewide championship. The game was broadcast over radio as he played alongside his brother, David, and cousin, Harpo. The team spoke in Spanish so they could cleverly share the strategy that would lead them to victory. Freddy was later quoted as saying the championship inspired him to seek out higher education. He was later inducted into the inaugural Florence Sports Hall of Fame and then the Arizona Hispanic Hall of Fame in 2009.

Freddy would go on to attend the University of Arizona on a baseball scholarship and was also recruited to play basketball in Wildcat Country. He aspired to be an inspirational coach, but as fate would have it, his plans were interrupted by divine intervention. Instead, he met the Lee family who encouraged him to pursue a pharmacy degree. Despite numerous counselors who discouraged his dream, citing his small-town roots and Hispanic heritage as barriers, Freddy ignored the insults, and instead dedicated himself to his demanding studies, eventually graduating from the University of Arizona College of Pharmacy in 1953. As a college graduate, Freddy set off a life altering chain of events for others, as we now roll three generations deep of alumni!

After graduation, Alfred moved to Superior, Arizona to work as a pharmacist at Ryan Evans Drug Store. There, he met and fell in love with Julia Vega, who he would later marry in 1955. Shortly after exchanging nuptials with his beautiful bride, he was drafted to serve in the Army overseas. He proudly served in Orleans, France returning to Superior in 1957. He would often reflect on his military service, and although he missed his family, he had a sincere fondness for the opportunity to have traveled abroad and experience the world. He would often reminisce about the various countries he visited and the memorable friendships he cultivated during that time.

Over the years, Alfred and Julia lived in Tacoma, Washington, then Maryvale, Arizona; however, Fred always dreamed of owning his own business and returning to the hometown he credited with raising him. He wanted to give back to the community that had supported him, so he and Julia returned to Florence. The couple went on to build a life, raising seven children, smothering them with abiding love, affection, and humility -- while instilling a dedication to hard work, devotion to their Catholic faith and a promise to serve others. They would often remind their children that to those who have more, more is expected.

In 1961, Alfred and Julia established the Apothecary Pharmacy Shop in Florence where he worked tirelessly. This was a sacred space that served as a place of healing, gathering, storytelling, extreme laughter, tribulations, joys and ordinary, everyday life. It was extraordinary! For over four decades he worked as the trusted town pharmacist with few days off and no extravagant vacations. It was the privilege of his life.

In what little spare time he had, he proudly served on the Florence City Council, Florence School Board and the Florence Industrial Authority and the Knights of Columbus at his parish for years. Service to others was the foundation of his life. He believed it was his responsibility to improve his community when and where possible.

Alfred loved sports fervently, cheering on his favorite teams, particularly the Arizona Wildcats, whom he was often frustrated with. He was known for cursing with passion and throwing inanimate objects at the television during his fits of irritation. In addition to sports, he was a zealous crossword aficionado, as well as an enthusiastic Jeopardy fan, playing religiously nearly every evening.

Most of all, our dad loved his wife, Julia, and the small circle of people around him intensely and we all knew it. He was a man of few words and when he spoke, it was with profound meaning and warmth. Alfred said what he meant and meant what he said.

These words don't suffice in expressing our grief and suffering we endure over losing a loyal husband, dad and human that is the epitome of grace and goodness. Rest well, or party with our brother, Andy, Chubs! Grief is the price we pay for loving so deeply! Thank you for sounding your barbaric yawp and for refusing to go gentle into that good night for 95 years!

Alfred is preceded in death, and we are certain he was greeted by his eccentric son, Andrew Charles Celaya; beautiful granddaughter, Christina Dawn Celaya; granddaughter, Milagro Nava; beloved brothers, Art, David, Eddie and Tommy; and his sisters, Carmela, Flora and Angie.

Alfred is survived by a loyal army, including brothers, Pete (Sally), Louie (Margie) and Tony (Marian); brothers-in-law, Eddie Anchondo and Richard Montano.

Children: Greg Celaya (Veronica); Daniel Celaya (Deborah - children Karla, Clifton); Lorena Chambers (Chris - children Alex (Cheri), Luke (Emmelyn), Rex); Timothy (children - Edward, Mark (Lauralee), Timothy Jr. (Taylor), Samantha (Kyle)); Alfred Celaya Jr., Alfred Sr.'s best friend (Cynthia - children Anna, Ava); Bettina Nava (Andrew - children Andres, Bianca, Paloma); Chanel Celaya Watkins (Carey).

He is also survived by great-grandchildren, Ramon, Reyna, Sophia, Cooper and Val.

In his final moments, he was surrounded with tremendous love and met the moment once again. He was also surrounded by donuts that he loved and would eat on a daily basis without gaining a pound. Each moment with our dad was exquisite and it was an extraordinary honor to know such a fine gentleman!

A celebration of life will take place on Saturday, September 14, 2024, at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, located at 221 E. 8th Street in Florence, Arizona. Visitation at 9:00 a.m., Rosary at 9:30 a.m., followed by a Mass at 10:00 a.m.