



Rita Marie Nader (née Andriano) and Alex N. Nader

It is with love and profound sorrow that the family of Rita Marie Nader (née Andriano) and Alexander Nicholas Nader, Jr. announce the passing of their beloved parents. After a battle with cancer, Alex passed away on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020, with his loving wife Rita by his side the entire day. It was befitting that

Alex be lifted to heaven on Easter Sunday, as he was a devoutly faithful man and lifetime parishioner of the Catholic Church, as well as a fourth degree Knights of Columbus member. Rita followed Alex to heaven on October 27, 2020, as her heart stopped and she passed peacefully at the Family Tree Assisted Living Facility. She was also a faithful and devout Catholic.

Alex was an Arizona native born into a Lebanese family in Miami, Arizona and he was fondly known as "Cookie" after a famous baseball player, Cookie Lavagetto, in his early years, and "Al" throughout his community. He was a WWII veteran having served in the U.S. Navy on a Coast Guard LST, and noteworthy of comment is the fact that he was a pharmacist's mate, so he wore the Marine Corps uniform even though he was in the Navy while serving in the South Pacific. One of the highlights of Al's life was going on the WWII Freedom Flight to Washington, D.C., and he proudly wore his LST hat with all of its ribbons everywhere he went. A lover of sports, some of Al's fondest memories of his early career were of coaching football, baseball, and basketball since he was an All American athlete. He also participated in the Arizona Coaches Association. Al was a pillar of the community in Casa Grande for over 60 years, and a longstanding Superintendent of the Casa Grande Union High School District. In addition, during his tenure in education, he served on numerous boards at the state level, such as the Arizona State Board of Education and the Arizona State Board of Vocational Education, and as such, he impacted so many lives. His legacy to CGUHS was the implementation of the Vocational Education Program and subsequent bringing to fruition the beautiful building that sits on Casa Grande Avenue. Al was instrumental in building the Vocational Education Building at CGUHS because he felt so strongly in addressing the needs of all students. He was the oldest and very proud member of the Kiwanis Club in the State of Arizona. Many may remember Al for his 1953 GMC red truck, which he proudly drove in local parades and showed at various car shows. Al was a dedicated and loving husband and a devoted father, grandfather, and great-grandfather who loved his family and friends. Al was an extraordinary man who led by example and he was always there for those who needed him. He never met a stranger. Rather, everybody was a just a friend he had not yet met. Al always saw the good in people, and oftentimes that was all he could see. Everyone who knew him loved him; and described him as a "Great Man", or an "Angel" and he will be sorely missed.

Rita was born in St. Joseph, Missouri, and she decided to come west to escape the harsh Midwest winters as a teacher in Lower Miami Middle School where she met Al on her first day. It was love at first sight, and they were married for 67 years. Rita was a Title IV Reading Teacher who changed the lives of so many children who she taught to read during her long career. She was so passionate about education that she always wanted to help those who were the most in need. Rita mentored and tutored numerous students and the result is that many became educators following her example. Education was of utmost importance to her, so she helped students write their college applications to ensure that they reached their highest potential. Rita always held the belief that education was something nobody could take from a person. She served on the Arizona State Board of Education, the Arizona State Board of Community Colleges and was a longstanding member of the Central Arizona Community College Board for over 17 years. Additionally, Rita was on the Arizona State Board of Health and later on the Pinal County Board of Health. Rita was a member of the American Association of University Women for many years. She also enjoyed membership in Zonta, Delta Kappa Gamma and Catholic Daughters of the Americas. A master bridge player, Rita loved to play bridge and entertain her friends and family. Rita was an artist who always put her artistic flair for putting things together into holidays and other celebrations. She loved fashion, and her shoes and purse always had to match. Oftentimes, she would be seen in cheetah print jackets and shoes because that was her favorite print. Pink nail polish was her favorite and she always had perfectly manicured pink nails. Rita had an affinity and special interest in the indigenous population of Arizona. Like Al, Rita was equally a dedicated and loving wife and devoted mother, grandmother and great-grandmother who loved her family and friends. Rita was an incredible person who also led by example, and she was always there for those who needed her. She was an intelligent and well-educated woman who was ahead of her time. Rita was known for her tremendous energy and generosity, she was loved and admired, and she will be missed.

As many may remember, Al and Rita were the proud and longtime owners of Hansel and Gretel Children's Clothing Store, which later transitioned into a larger customer base expanding into pre-teen and adult clothing, and this larger store was called The Unicorn. They operated these successful businesses in Casa Grande for over 14 years. As a result of their superior business acumen, Al and Rita were inducted into the Casa Grande Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame.

Al and Rita are survived by their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who live all over the country and in different parts of the world. Their oldest daughter, Renee McCaffrey, lives in Chicago, Illinois with her husband, Joe McCaffrey. Renee and Joe have three children and four grandchildren. Al and Rita's son, Andy, lives in Boise, Idaho with his wife, Jo. Andy has three children. The youngest daughter, Andrea Ballo, lives in San Diego, California with her two children.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the family has been waiting to have funeral services for Al and Rita. After much deliberation, it has been decided that rather than wait for an opportunity to have the funeral at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Casa Grande, the funeral mass will be held at St. Benedict Catholic Church in the Phoenix community of Ahwatukee, located at 16223 S. 48th Street, Phoenix 85048. The service will be on Saturday, January 9, 2021, commencing with the Rosary at 10:30 A.M., and the funeral immediately following at 10:45 A.M. The services will also be livestreamed on <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNxWJ4wvmIMJlu9kN3A9l-g>. For more information on how to access the live stream service, please contact St. Benedict's directly at 480-961-1610.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in the names of Rita and Alex Nader to The Sharp HealthCare Foundation and it will be designated for cancer and cardiac research.

Checks should be made payable to Sharp HealthCare Foundation and mailed to 8695 Spectrum Center Blvd., San Diego, California 92123.