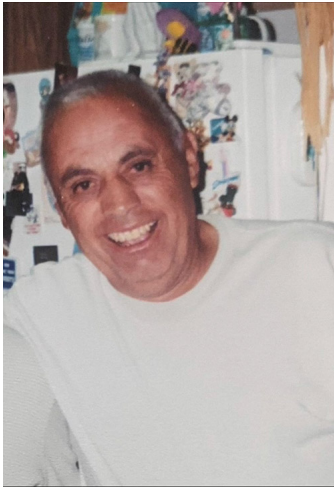


Honoring a hometown hero

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 25 March 2022 05:49



Veterans Memorial Complex at Fort Canyon renamed Joe Vargas Veterans Memorial Complex

Joe Vargas served the Gallup community as the Parks Director from November 1963 to December 2000. Now, 21 years after his last day of work and two years after his death on March 29, 2020, he is being honored in an extraordinary way.

During the March 8 city council meeting, the current Parks Director, Vincent Alonzo, came to the council to speak about Vargas and to recommend that the Veterans Memorial Complex at Ford Canyon be renamed the Joe Vargas Veterans Memorial Complex.

“Ford Canyon was Joe’s baby,” Alonzo said. “He was proud of Ford Canyon. To me, the park system is all because of Joe. He worked hard and he was proud of his parks.”

Mayor Louie Bonaguidi also spoke highly of Vargas. He noted that he’d known the man before he’d even started at the parks department.

“He was an amazing person, and even after he retired, he still refereed at basketball games,”

Honoring a hometown hero

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 25 March 2022 05:49

Bonaguidi said.

Bonaguidi also spoke on Vargas's work ethic, noting that he was usually up at 4:30 am and would work until 11:30 pm.

Councilor Fran Palochak, Dist. 1, also praised Vargas.

"Nobody's more deserving for that park; that was his baby," Palochak said in agreement. "It should be named after him."

Before he started working for the City of Gallup, Vargas served in the Army from November 1961 to October 1963, when he was honorably discharged.

The council ultimately agreed to rename the Veterans Memorial Complex at Ford Canyon to the Joe Vargas Veterans Memorial Complex.

In an interview with the *Sun*, one of Vargas's daughters, Rae Ann Vargas-Ruiz, spoke about how much the dedication means to her family.

"This is an honor that will live past us, and that is such a touching memorial for him," Vargas-Ruiz said.

She also explained how much her dad loved working in the parks department.

"I see the love that he had for the people of Gallup first, above all. He would go out of his way; it wasn't just a job it was a part of him."

Honoring a hometown hero

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
Friday, 25 March 2022 05:49

By Molly Ann Howell
Sun Correspondent