



# NMACD MEMORIAL 2024

# Bud Bilberry

## Border SWCD

November 29, 1939 – August 26, 2024



84 years old



“Bud” Bilberry was born on November 29, 1939, in Morton, Texas. He grew up in the Floyd community and graduated from Floyd High School in 1959. He attended for a short time on a basketball scholarship at Wayland University and for a short time at Eastern New Mexico University. He married Alma Lyle Howell in 1961, and they lived their entire married life on the E Bar Ranch near Kenna. Bud loved everything about ranch life and especially enjoyed working cattle on his favorite horse, “Shorty.” He, along with a small group of men, were instrumental in the formation of High Plains Rodeo Association in 1976.

Bud was a devout Christian and would share his faith in Jesus with anyone he encountered. He was also a gifted vocalist and led revivals, preaching and singing, throughout New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Colorado. He recorded two gospel albums and was a member of the Kenna Community Church for 63 years.

In addition, Bud served on the Elida School Board for seven years, the Chaves County Soil Conservation Board, and the CHEM Board for the preservation of the Prairie Chicken. Bud also participated in the Prison Ministry at New Mexico State Penitentiary in Santa Fe following the riots in 1981.

Bud is survived by his wife, Alma, of more than 63 years, his son, Jeff and family; his daughter, Jana and family; four grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by two grandchildren, his parents, five brothers, and two sisters.

# James “Slim” Whitlock

December 26, 1959 – March 9, 2024 (64 years old)

**Caballo swcd**



James Lynn “Slim” Whitlock was born on December 26, 1959, in Hatch, NM, and passed away on March 9, 2024. James was known by such endearing names as “Bones,” “Slim,” and “Papo.” Slim married the love of his life, Gracie in 1978, and together they had two children, Brandy and Cameron. They also raised their granddaughter, Destiny Whitlock. Slim’s greatest joy was his family, and he took great pride in their accomplishments. Slim enjoyed hosting and cooking for family gatherings and loved hunting trips with his father, brother, uncles, grandfather, and his sons and grandsons.

Slim was a prominent figure in Hatch Valley: Served as Mayor of Hatch, a trustee on the Hatch Valley School Board, and was part of the Hatch FFA Meats Team that won a national title. In addition to all of this, Slim served on the Caballo SWCD and was owner of Jim’s Supermarket in Hatch.

Slim Whitlock was survived by his wife of 45 years, Gracie “Bunny” Whitlock, his two children, Brandy, Cameron, and Destiny; Mother, Mary Frances; sister, Debbie; brother, Bobby, five grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father, J.B., sister-in-law, Shirley, and brother- in-law, Daniel. A special tribute was paid to Slim by Representative Gabe Vasquez on March 12 at which time, he said, “Slim’s impact reached far beyond the duties of his office. He was a pillar of strength, a comforting presence in times of need, and a beacon of positivity with a smile that could light up a room.”



# Doug Allan Johnston

February 9, 1945 — September 6, 2024 (79 years old)

## Central Tri-County swcd

Doug Johnston was born in Victoria, Texas and passed away on September 6, 2024, in Torrance County. Although he always considered himself a Texan, his heart and true home was in Torrance County, New Mexico. Doug married Danielle Pressly in 1976, and the two made their home in Torrance County in 1978. He worked for over 30 years at the University of New Mexico Bookstore, starting there in college and continuing after graduation to become the Associate Director. He also completed farrier school at NMSU and spent time on weekends and evenings shoeing horses around the community. Doug later worked for the Moriarty-Edgewood School District as Director of Maintenance and Transportation. He ended his career as the Director of Planning and Zoning for Torrance County before retiring in 2008.

Doug was a lifelong learner and an avid reader of books, amassing quite a literary collection and admired Southwestern and Native American art and culture. He was a quiet man, loved and supported his family and friends, always offering advice to “take a deep seat.” Doug was a staunch defender of the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and the freedoms given to us as citizens of the United States. When asked, he was most proud of his family, his children, his grandchildren, and his home.

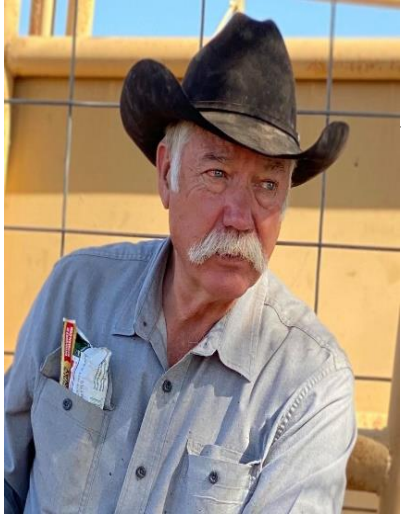
Doug is survived by his wife, Danielle (Associate Member of Central Tri-County SWCD) of nearly 48 years, son Chris and family; daughter, Rachel and family; brothers Bob and family, Fred and family, brother-in-law John “Jack” as well as many nieces, nephews, grand nieces and nephews.



# James L. "Jim" Wood

September 18, 1955 – November 12, 2023 (68 years old)

**Deming SWCD**



James "Jim" Wood entered into eternal rest on November 12, 2024, at his ranch home near Deming. Jim graduated from Cloudcroft High School in 1973 and married the love of his life, Susan, in 1978. Following high school, he became an electrician and owned the Wood Electric, Inc. After many years in the electric business, he followed his dreams and bought the Wood Cattle Company Ranch in Deming. His dreams were for his family and grandsons to have strong foundations from which to grow. His grandsons were his world, and he loved spending every minute that he could with them.

Jim was a member of the Deming SWCD for 22 years and was still serving at the time of his death. He loved his community and worked hard for conservation which showed in his hard work and dedication to the Deming SWCD.

Jim was survived by his wife of 45 years, Susan; daughter, Jodie and husband, grandsons, Riley, Reuben, Ryder, Ryndon, and Rance and by his brother, Jess; sisters, Cindy and Kathy, plus in-laws, nieces, and nephews. He was preceded in death by his son, Jedidiah, his parents Carrol and Edna Wood.



# Dona Irwin

September 13, 1932 – October 10, 2024, 2024 (92 years old)

## Deming SWCD

Dona Irwin was born in Luna County on September 13, 1932, and passed away at age 92 on October 10, 2024. Dona was a long-time resident in Deming and was a former New Mexico House of Representative from District 32, having served in that capacity for 18 years. She also served on the Deming Soil & Water Conservation District in 2000.

She was known for her honesty and prided herself on transparency and openness and had a way of working with people regardless of their political beliefs. Dona always said, “What you see is what you get.” She was an advocate for New Mexico’s children, families, and rural communities and worked hard for healthy meals and gardens for senior centers in rural communities.

Dona married Claude Irwin in 1951 and was preceded in death by her husband, Claude and sister, Bobbie.





# Christian Doniciano Sandoval

October 20, 1994 – August 6, 2023

**Lava SWCD**



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Christian Sandoval was only 28 years old when he passed away. Christian was an avid team and calf roper, active in rodeo, and was named A&E's television show "Rookie of the Year." He was a believer in his traditional Native American beliefs, was a talented artist, and enjoyed watching his daughter play sports. Christian loved outdoor life and hunting and will be remembered as being a great dad, brother, and son.

Christian is survived by his father, Dion Sandoval; his mother, Jolynn, his daughter, Bailee, and his significant other, Ana Ibarra, as well as several brothers and sisters. He was preceded in death by his grandparents.

# **Rebecca Gail “Becky” Barber**

March 26, 1951 – February 26, 2024 (73 years old)

**LAVA SWCD**

Rebecca Gail Barber (Becky) was born on March 26, 1951, in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and passed away on February 15, 2024, after years of heart problems. After graduating from high school and a short stint in college, Becky went to work at the family newspaper, Grants Daily Beacon, one of the few female-operated and managed newspapers in the country. She was editor of the newspaper and was president of the New Mexico Associated Press Managing Editors in 1980-1981. Becky was also on the staff of the Annapolis Capital newspaper in Maryland and served in public relations for the port of Baltimore.

Becky married John Trefren in 2010, and she and John loved living in New Mexico, traveling, music, and singing. While in Las Cruces, she volunteered at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum. Becky made friends easily, and her favorite pass times included watching reruns of “The Andy Griffith Show” and collecting buffalo figurines of all types. In 2020 she suffered a head injury and later moved to an assisted living facility to be near to her sister in Grapevine, Texas.

Becky is survived by her sister, Sandra Hearnberger and family; brother, Wayne Erin and family; sister Cynthia Spidle (Lava SWCD Admin. Assistant) and family, and several nieces and nephews.





# Charles Virgil Webster

January 15, 1947 - January 29, 2024 (77 years old)

**Mesa SWCD**

Charles (Charley) Webster was born on January 15, 1947, in the family home north of Logan, NM, and passed away at his home in Mosquero January 29, 2024. Charley graduated from Logan High School and spent his life employed by many occupations including millright/carpenter, New Mexico Dept. of Transportation in Clayton, school bus driver in Wagon Mound and Mosquero, rancher, and well service owner and operator.

He was a lifelong member of the Church of Christ, an active member of the Mesa SWCD, a member of USDA-FSA Harding County Committee, as well as the volunteer Fire Department in Ocate and Rosebud. Charley was a loving husband to Lydia Webster for over 50 years, a fun-loving father, father-in-law, and grandfather. He was a friend in many communities including Logan, Mosquero, Wagon Mound, Clayton, Ocate, Aztec, and Canyon, Texas.

He is survived by his wife, Lydia, four children, and 16 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild, brother and brother-in-law, and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.



# David Kruse

April 30, 1949 — September 10, 2024 (75 years old)

## Mora-Wagon Mound swcd



David Kruse was born in Las Vegas, NM on April 30, 1949, and passed away on September 10, 2024, due to cancer complications. He graduated from Wagon Mound Public Schools in 1967 and from Highlands University in 1971 with a BA degree in Industrial Arts and a minor in Physical Education.

David started a trucking business and was owner/operator of Kruse Trucking for over 40 years. He was also a rancher and had just been appointed to Mora-Wagon Mound SWCD in April 2024. He loved working on his ranch near Wagon Mound and talking to his family and friends, his dogs, and loved a good practical joke or water fight.

David was preceded in death by his identical twin brother, Dale, his sister-in-law, Lynette, and his daughter, Rachel. He is survived by his wife, Kathy Kruse; daughter, Sarah and family; son-in-law, Karrie; daughter, Michelle; son, Chris and family; son, Lee; brother Charles and wife; sister, Mary and husband; sister, Becky and husband; sister Karen and husband; and grandchildren, Claire, Cora, and Leah.

# Mark William McKinley Sr.

April 26, 1954 – March 19, 2024 (69 years old)

**NRCS & NMACD**  
(Retired)

Mark W. McKinley Sr. was born in Clayton, New Mexico, and passed away on March 19, 2024, in Amarillo, Texas. He graduated from Alamogordo High School in 1972 and from the New Mexico State University with an Agricultural Engineering degree in 1977. Mark began a career with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in 1974 and earned his Professional Engineering license in 1983. He retired from NRCS in 2011 after 37 years of service.

Mark enjoyed the outdoors & activities from camping, hiking, walking, golfing, bowling, and traveling and visiting with everyone. He became regarded as the unofficial NRCS-NM historian as he loved keeping up with former and present employees either in person, by phone, letter, etc. We all miss hearing from him and his keeping us up to date on the NRCS family. He truly liked people, visiting with anyone he saw. Mark was very supportive of his father for several years & made sure that his dad was well taken care while taking his dad on numerous trips around the state before his father died.

Mark is survived by his daughter, Shandalyn, and son, Mark McKinley Jr, one granddaughter, Cali, and one grandson, Colt. He was very proud of his children and grandchildren and talked about them all the time.





# Arnold Martinez

**Taos SWCD**

Arnold worked many years as a public transportation driver in Denver, CO. After retirement, he returned to the family farm in Arroyo Hondo and worked with Taos SWCD on irrigation pipeline and irrigation pond projects.



# John "Jack" Kessler

**Taos SWCD**

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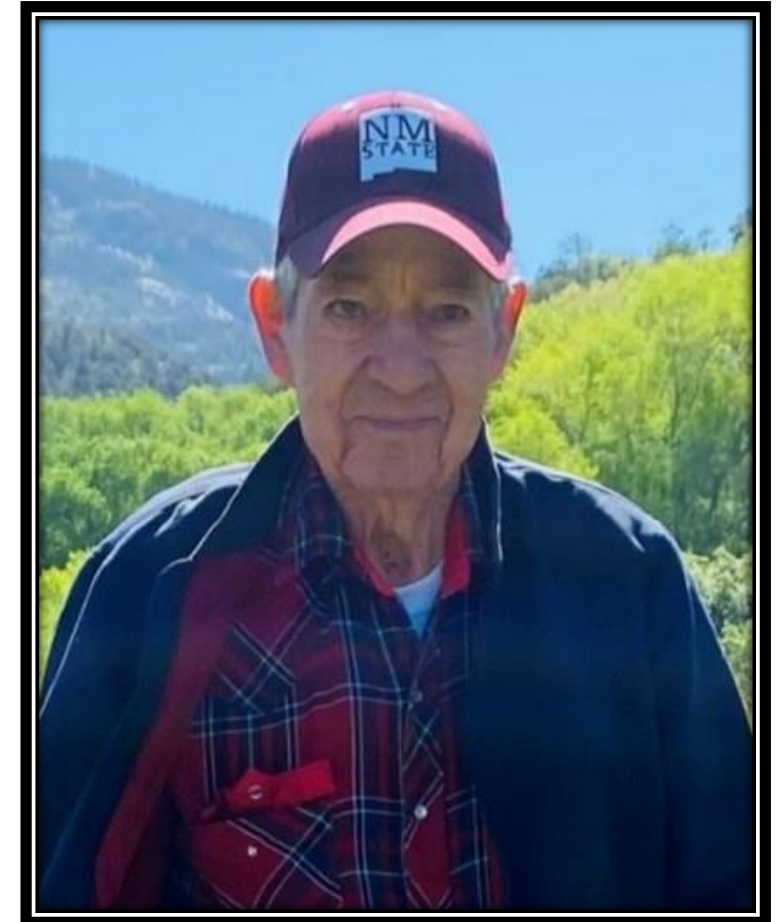


Mr. Kessler was a lifetime educator who relocated to Taos from Columbus OH to teach at Taos Pueblo. He worked with Taos SWCD on wildlife watering tanks west of the Rio Grande Gorge. Jack was a man of many interests, but his passion for computers and sharing spiritual and life wisdom stood out.

# Palemon Martinez

**Taos SWCD**

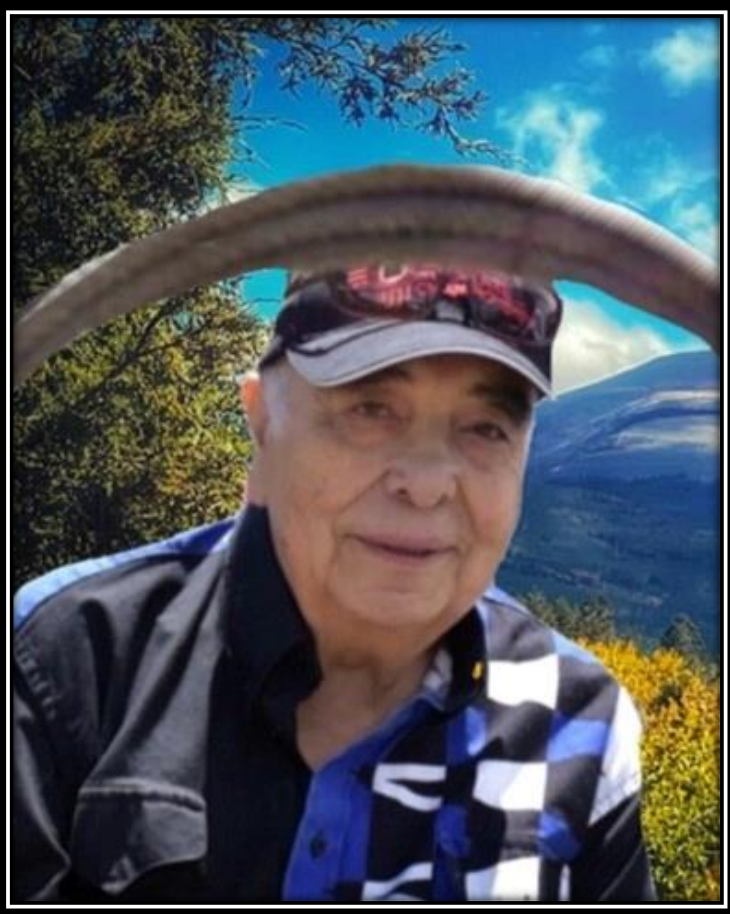
Palemon worked for NMSU Cooperative Extension Service for over 30 years. He retired in 1987 and volunteered on many projects related to agriculture, ranching, and acequias. In 2000, under President Bill Clinton he was appointed to the original Valles Caldera Trust Board of Trustees. He was also appointed by Governor Bruce King to serve on the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. Mr. Martinez was instrumental in negotiating the Abeyta Water Settlement with Taos Pueblo and he worked with Taos SWCD on cross fencing, noxious weeds and headgate projects on his family farm.





# Ambrose Mascarenas

**Taos SWCD**



Ambrose Mascarenas was a lifelong resident of Penasco, NM. He served six years in the New Mexico National Guard, served as a Taos County Commissioner and served on the Kit Carson Electric Co-Op Board. He was also elected as a Taos County Magistrate Judge, a role he served for 14 years.

Mr. Mascarenas worked his ranch for many years, producing hay, alfalfa, raising cattle, riding his horses, working with his backhoe wherever needed, bringing wood from the mountains, irrigating, fixing fences, branding cattle with his family and friends, and more. He worked with Taos SWCD on irrigation pond and headgate projects on his land in Llano de San Juan.

# Lilly Vigil

## Taos SWCD

Lilly Vigil and her husband Cruz farmed forty acres near Martinez Hacienda in the Ranchitos neighborhood of Taos. Together they raised five children, the youngest of which is Peter Vigil, Taos SWCD District Manager. Lilly instilled a strong work ethic in all her children. Mrs. Vigil participated in both NRCS and Taos SWCD programs.

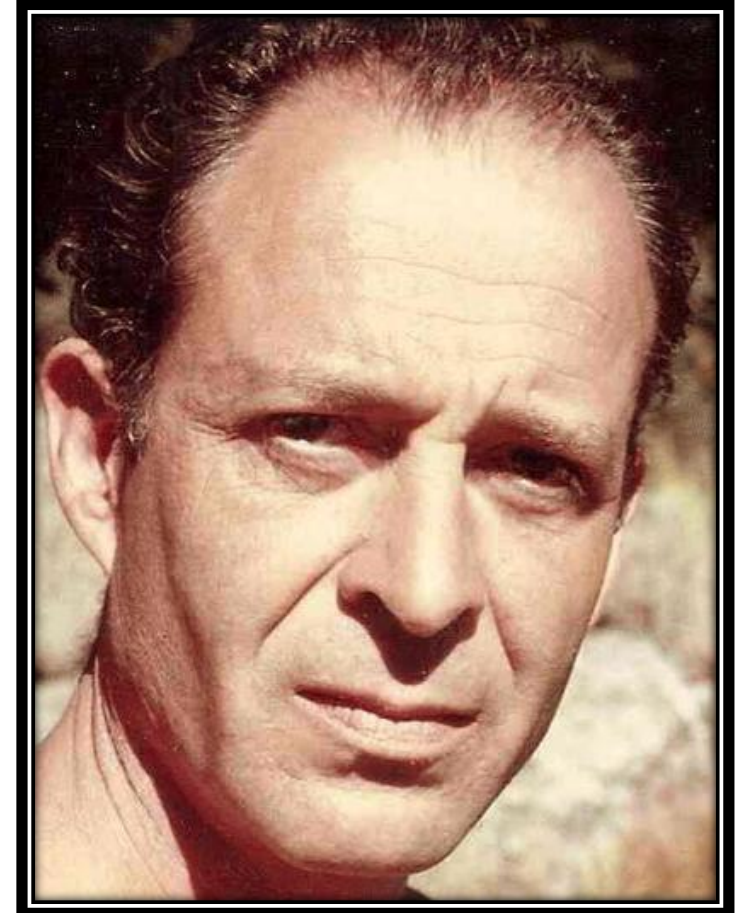


# Alfred Moscarella

**Taos SWCD**

Mr. Moscarella served in the US Air force and was a thoracic and cardiovascular surgeon in Rockland County, NY. Due to his love of skiing, he retired to Taos in 1988. As a retiree, he soon joined the ranks as a ski instructor at Taos Ski Valley.

Mr. Moscarella was a participant in the Taos SWCD Forest Health Program.





# Ilse Mayer

**Taos SWCD**

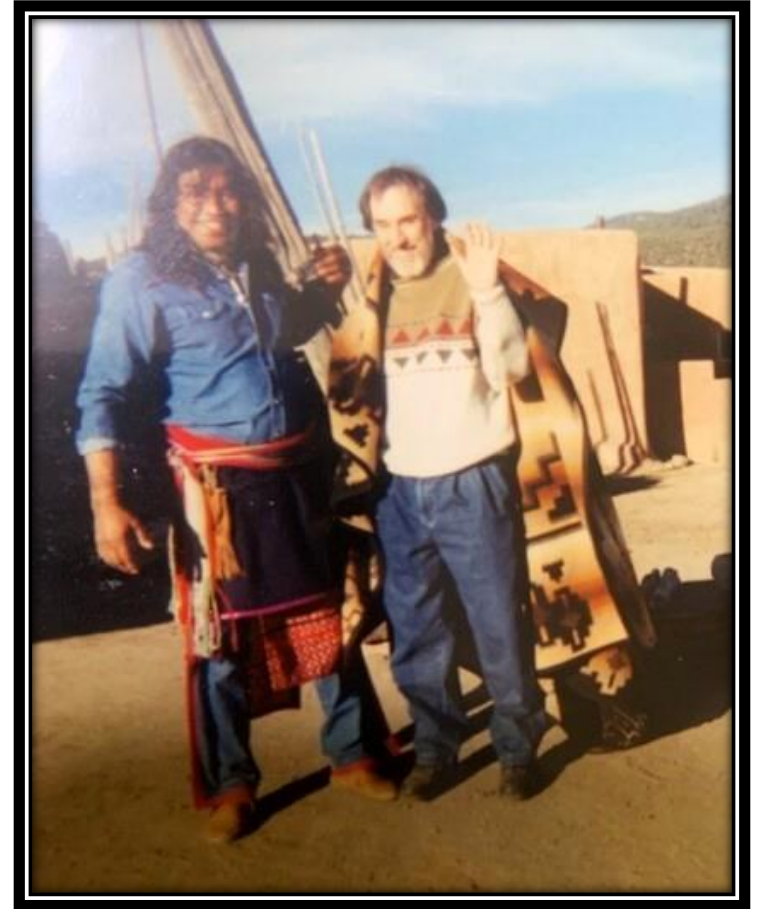


Mrs. Mayer was born in Vienna Austria at the beginning of the second World War. She left Europe for the United States when she was 20 and became a biochemist, working at various locations around the US. Her love of skiing brought her to Taos in 1961 where she became a ski instructor and eventually built and operated the original Hotel Edelweiss with her husband, Bernard. Mrs. Mayer participated in the Taos SWCD Forest Health Program.

# Rudolfo “Rudy” Velarde

**Taos SWCD**

Rudy served his country in the US Army during the Korean conflict war. He was an acequia commissioner for the Acequia Madre de Rio Grande del Rancho. He worked as an electrician for 47 years and worked with Taos SWCD on projects for his local irrigation ditch.



# John Torres

## Taos SWCD

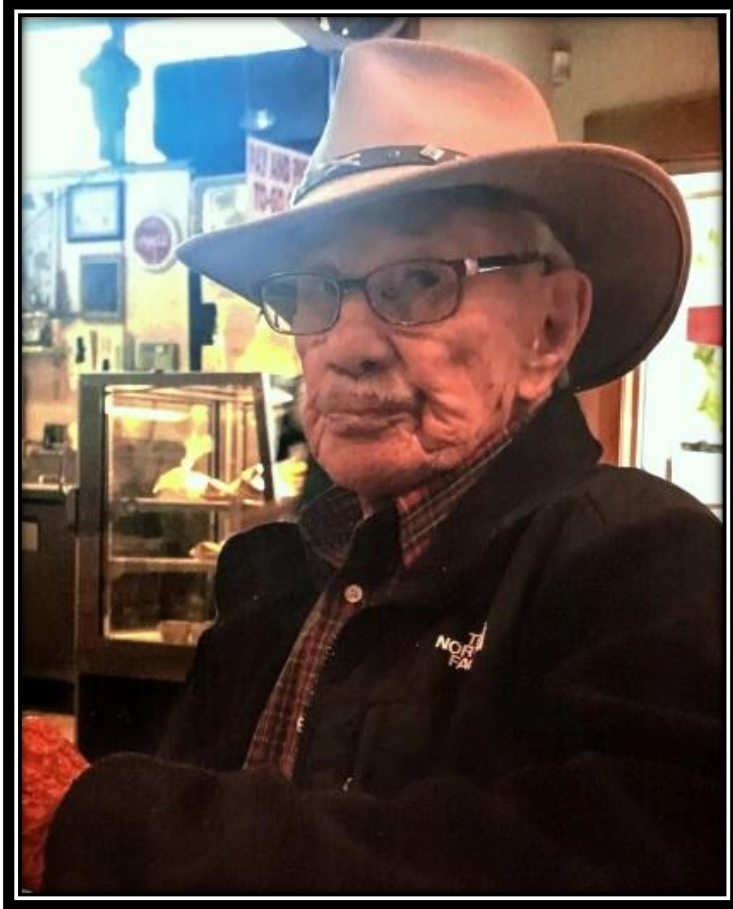


John was a Korean War veteran who served his country in the U.S. Army and NM National Guard for 33 years. He retired in January of 2007 as the Command Sergeant Major for the State of New Mexico. While serving his country, he received the Legion of Merit Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the War on Terrorism Medal, and the Korean Defense Service Medal. Mr. Torres and his wife Concha worked with Taos SWCD to complete acequia projects on their land in Las Colonias.



# Jose Silva

**Taos SWCD**



Mr. Silva lived to be 102 years of age. He was raised on the family farm in San Cristobal and was a World War II Veteran. He worked many years for the Internal Revenue Service. Jose and his wife Beatriz were local business owners and worked with Taos SWCD to install headgates on his farm.

# Lawrence C. Jaramillo

**Taos SWCD**

Lawrence Jaramillo was a Vietnam War veteran who worked for the Chevron Mine outside Questa for 35 years. He worked with Taos SWCD on a headgate project in El Rito north of Questa, NM.



# Riginaldo “Henry” Martinez

**Taos SWCD**

Henry worked for the US Forest Service for 30 years. He served as a commissioner for the Acequias de Chamisal Y Ojito and completed several Taos SWCD projects for the community ditch in Chamisal.



# Ben Cardenas

**Taos SWCD**



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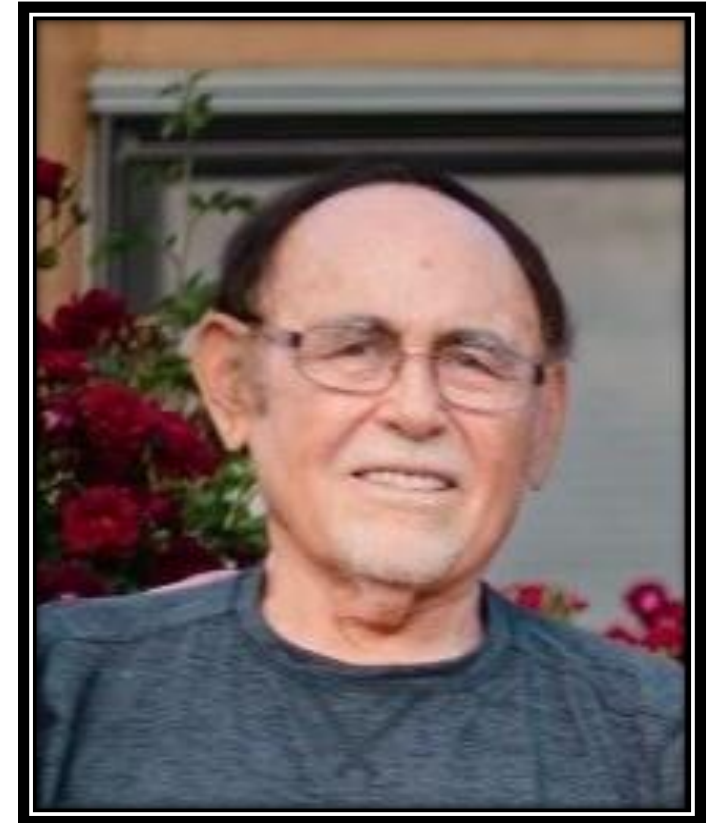
Ben served in the NM Army National Guard for 34 years. He was an acequia commissioner for the San Francisco de Pauda acequia in Ranchitos. He and his wife Eleanor worked with Taos SWCD on several headgate projects.



# Ernesto Leroy Graham

**Taos SWCD**

Mr. Graham worked for the NM State Highway Department for 30 years and was a board member of the Taos Valley Acequia Association. He helped negotiate the Abeyta Water settlement and in 2016, Mr. Graham was awarded the New Mexico Acequia Association Farmer/Rancher of the Year Award. He was a third-generation rancher who completed many conservation projects with Taos SWCD.





A peaceful autumn landscape featuring a wooden bench in the foreground, partially covered with fallen golden leaves. A large tree with vibrant orange and yellow foliage dominates the left side of the frame, its branches arching over the bench. The background shows a soft-focus forest with more trees in various shades of green and yellow. The overall atmosphere is calm and inviting.

*Rest in Peace...*