



MANUELITA "LINDA" MICHAEL

August 7, 1952 - April 27, 2022

Many of us avoid developmentally disabled adults and teenagers because we fear what we don't know. Linda Michael spent her working life looking for these folks, tending to their needs and loving them.

Linda Michael, who had a long and distinguished history of service with the developmentally disabled, collapsed and died suddenly at home in Hesperia on April 27. Cause of death is pending an autopsy. She was 69.

She retired from the Victor Valley Union High School District where she spent 12 years working with the most challenging class of students – severely handicapped teens and adults from ages 14 to 22. These were students who needed constant care throughout their day.

Most often the smallest person in the classroom, Linda tackled her job as a special education aide armed only with a smile and a willingness to help and her love. "These were big kids, but Linda loved her job and her students," said husband Joe Michael.

Linda's friends may also recall that before VVUHSD, she had for many years worked with developmentally disabled adults at IBP of Apple Valley, specializing in teaching daily life skills to her clients in the workplace, on outings to the market and in settings from the laundromat to ordering fast food. "Working with adults Linda saw some hairy situations at times, but she always managed to work her way through it," husband Joe recalled.

While Linda was working at IBP out of the Apple Valley office she met another employee who would change her life. Joe Michael was working at IBP out of

the Victorville branch. "Our first date was on 6-19 (June 19, 2001)," Joe recalled. "I asked her to marry me on 6-19 2002, a year later." They married on Dec. 7, 2002.

Linda Saenz was born on Aug. 7, 1952 in Tehachapi CA. Her parents were Pete and Juanita Saenz and Linda was the 11th and the last sibling to join the family.

Her brother Pete Saenz said the family never let Linda forget that the great Tehachapi earthquake (7.3 on the Richter scale) hit in July 1952 and the Linda Saenz earthquake hit the family a month later.

In 1954 the family relocated to La Puente CA where Linda and her siblings grew up. Linda graduated from La Puente High in 1970.

Linda's first career was in Optometry having earned her state certificate. She worked in the industry for a number of years. But as a "people person" that trade did not give her the personal satisfaction she was looking for.

She soon landed a job at Queen of the Valley Hospital in Covina in food service and liked the idea of more contact with patients. Later she worked at the Hillcrest assisted living facility in LaVerne and enjoyed serving patients and their variety of needs.

In 1993, at the urging of older brother Pete Saenz, Linda moved to the High Desert. "There were jobs and we wanted her closer to family," Pete recalled. She stuck and enjoyed the desert lifestyle.

Joe and Linda were looking forward to their 20th wedding anniversary in December. They planned to renovate a family home this summer.

"We were just living our lives," Joe said. "We went out to dinner the previous Monday and we were at the Dodger game last week."

Linda's passing was very much unexpected.

While Linda enjoyed her work before retirement, Joe says Linda "was always an old-fashioned girl at heart." She loved to sew and cook and share her doll collection with her nieces over the years. She enjoyed traveling and was a movie buff. She was a self-taught hair stylist having picked up pointers from

late brother Al who had been a barber in the Army.

“Linda was a mother figure to my sister (Liza) and I when my Mom (Julie Saenz) died” in 2018, said niece Zina Valenzuela. “She helped us through difficult times and she was there when you needed a motherly influence. With Linda it was always family first.”

“I’m sure Linda is a first ballot Hall-of-Famer in Heaven,” husband Joe added. Besides husband Joe, Linda is survived by brothers Pete Saenz and John Porrás of Victorville; brother-in-law Billy Michael of Hesperia. She was very close to nieces Zina Valenzuela of Fontana and Liza Gomez of Victorville. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews in California, New Mexico, Texas and Kansas. Linda was preceded in death by eight siblings: Vicky Porrás, Connie Porrás, Lala Porrás, Lupe Porrás, Val Porrás, Sal Porrás, Albino Porrás and Fred Porrás.