

City of Chino ❖ Hall of Fame

presented on January 17, 2012 honoring

Ruben S. Ayala

Ruben S. Ayala, a native of Chino, was one of the community's most significant citizens in its history. Born March 6, 1922, of Mexican heritage and a son of immigrants, he became a role model of achievement as a citizen, community leader, and legislative representative. His more than 40 years of public service started on the local school board and ended as a distinguished State Senator for a quarter of a century.

A child of the Chino barrio, he began his education in the thirties in a segregated school, but rose to community-wide recognition for his athletic abilities in basketball and baseball at Chino High School, where he was a team captain before graduating with the Class of 1941.

After Pearl Harbor, Mr. Ayala enlisted in the Marine Corps where he served four years and saw action and heavy fighting in the South Pacific. He was also involved in the mop-up at Guadalcanal and fighting in New Guinea.

A year before being mustered out of the military, he married his high school sweetheart Irene Morales in 1945. As a civilian, he became involved in sales and television repair before becoming an insurance agent in his hometown. Because of his involvement in the PTA when his sons Ruben (Buddy), Maurice, and Gary attended Gird Elementary School, he was elected to the School Board in 1955 and to the Chino City Council in 1962. He ran successfully as the City's first-elected Mayor in 1964; and the County Board of Supervisors in 1966, where he was Chairman for four years. Early in 1974, he filled a vacancy in the State Senate, serving through 1998.

During his career, Mr. Ayala only lost one election, a congressional primary. As a Democrat, he prided himself on his independence and let it be known that he represented all of his constituency, not just one faction or ethnicity. He served with honesty and forthrightness, yet never lost sight of his heritage and his opportunity to succeed. As Chairman of the Agriculture and Water Resources Committee, he took a lead role in the promotion of the Peripheral Canal as a solution to the State's water problems, a project later turned down by the voters. He was a member of a number of significant committees, including the Senate Rules Committee.

Mr. Ayala began his advocacy for parks as a Chino Council Member. As a Supervisor, he promoted the formation of the present Prado Regional Park; as Senator, he obtained land from the prison system for the major Chino park, which was named Ruben S. Ayala Park in his honor. His role in education and the community was recognized by the naming of the first high school in Chino Hills, Ruben S. Ayala High School.

Mr. Ayala died January 4, 2012, three and a half years after his beloved Irene and 63 years of marriage.